DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 388 424 PS 023 719

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Decker, Larry E.; And Others |
| TITLE | Parent and Community Involvement. Field Review Edition. Teacher's Manual. |
| INSTITUTION | Decker (Larry E.) and Associates, Boca Raton, FL. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Florida Atlantic Univ. Foundation, Boca Raton. |
| REPORT NO | ISBN-0-930388-13-5 |
| PUB DATE | Aug 95 |
| NOTE | 94p.; Foreword by P. Michael Timpane. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Florida Atlantic University Foundation, Community Education, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431 ($17.95; orders for 10 or more copies, $12.95 each). |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Community Cooperation; *Community Involvement; Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Family School Relationship; *Parent Participation; Parents; Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Conferences; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Partnerships in Education; School Community Relationship; Teacher Role; Teaching Guides |

ABSTRACT

The role of the classroom teacher in the success of parent and community involvement efforts in American public schools is this document's focus. Because schools need to discover new ways to foster parental and community involvement in education, this document outlines a new perspective concerning parental and community involvement that encompasses the following three propositions: (1) schools cannot succeed without the collaboration of parents and communities; (2) families need strong support to become and remain functional; and (3) communities must take charge of their children's developmental needs. The chapters are as follows: (1) "Introduction," covering forces of resistance, learning environments, education myths, and school-community issues; (2) "Demographics and Trends Influencing Public Education," including population growth and decline, disappearing dads, population projections, single-parent families, and household income; (3) "Changing Attitudes," describing characteristics of effective schools, barriers to parental involvement, and sources of confidence; (4) "What the Research is Saying"; (5) "A Framework for Parent Involvement"; (6) "Principles for Successful Programs and Strategies for Reducing Home-School Barriers"; (7) "Implementation Strategies," detailing factors complicating parent involvement efforts, case studies, and principals' and teachers' roles in family involvement initiatives; (8) "Building Bridges between Home and School"; and (9) "Closing Thoughts," including a final examination on parent and community involvement. A listing of members of the National Coalition for Parent and Community Involvement (NCPIE) is included. (BGC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 388 424

# TEACHER'S MANUAL FOR PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Le Decker
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

By
Larry E. Decker, Gloria A. Gregg, and Virginia A. Decker

Foreword by
P. Michael Timpane

PS 023719



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# TEACHER'S MANUAL
# FOR PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

By
Larry E. Decker, Gloria A. Gregg, and Virginia A. Decker

Foreword by
P. Michael Timpane

Published by
National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway
Suite 91A
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
703-359-8973 Fax 703-359-0972

Field Review Edition
August 1995

## OVERVIEW

The materials in this manual have been collected, adapted, condensed, or developed over the past five years for use in graduate classes in school-community relations and community education as well as in units on educational partnerships and family and community involvement. Individual sections have been used separately for presentations and workshops targeted to specific professional and community groups.

More than 30 colleagues in the Community Education Computer Network (CENET) have provided comments and suggestions for this publication. Some of the contents have been extracted, updated, and expanded from *Home-School-Community Relations: Trainers Manual and Study Guide* (1994) by Larry E. Decker and Associates. The publication may be used for reference, as the basis of a course, or as individual units for topical presentations.

The important role of the classroom teacher to the success of parent and community involvement efforts in American public schools is the focus of this publication.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many colleagues helped with various phases of this publication, including the field review process, recommendation of materials, and the preparation of the manuscript. We would especially like to thank:

Kim Biocchi, Suttons Bay, Michigan
Mary Boo, Alexandria, Virginia
Tracy Brown, University of Virginia
Valerie Romney, University of Virginia
Donna Schoeny, DESIGNations
Renee White, New York, New York

---

Cover design by Laurie Hager
DESIGNations of Charlottesville

---

©Larry E. Decker & Associates

IBSN: 0-930388-13-5

**FOREWORD** ..... 1
Finding a New Fit for the Family, Community, and Schools ..... 1

**I - INTRODUCTION** ..... 2
I-1. School is Out—Learning Is In ..... 3
I-2. The Emerging Transformation to Place Learning First ..... 3
I-3. Forces of Resistance ..... 4
I-4. Learning and School Environments ..... 5
I-5. Education's Misleading Myths ..... 7
I-6. Ten Truths of Parent Involvement ..... 9
I-7. School-Community Issues: An Attitudinal Survey ..... 9
Suggested Group Activity ..... 10
I-8. Understanding Your Community ..... 10
I-9. America's Smallest School: The Family ..... 11
I-10. The Leverage of the Nine Percent ..... 11
I-11. Why the Focus on Parent and Community Involvement in the Education of Children ..... 12

**II - DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS INFLUENCING PUBLIC EDUCATION** ..... 13
II-1. U.S. Population Growth and Decline ..... 14
II-2. The Traditional American Family, 1955-1992 ..... 14
II-3. Changes in Household Type, 1980-1990 ..... 15
II-4. Disappearing Dads ..... 15
II-5. Projections of the U.S. Population, Age 0-17, 1990-2010 ..... 16
II-6. Vulnerable Family Index ..... 16
II-7. The Children of Single-Parent Families ..... 17
II-8. Children and Families ..... 17
II-9. SAT Scores by Family Income ..... 18
II-10. Household Income in 1990 Dollars ..... 18
Suggested Group Activity ..... 18
II-11. Demographic Issues for the Year 2000 ..... 18
II-12. Growing Up Is Risky Business and Schools Are Not to Blame ..... 19
II-13. PDK/Gallup Poll — Grading the Public Schools ..... 19
II-14. Summary of *A Look at Tomorrow* ..... 21
Suggested Group Activity ..... 22
Recommended Reading ..... 22

**III - CHANGING ATTITUDES** ..... 23
III-1. Characteristics of Effective Schools ..... 24
III-2. A Comparison of Family Practices and School Factors That Contribute to a Child's School Success ..... 24
III-3. Personal Experiences that Influence Attitudes Toward Schools ..... 25
III-4. Barriers to Parental Involvement ..... 25
III-5. Practices and Conditions that Contribute to the Non-Involvement of Families ..... 26

III-6. Barriers Faced by Poor and Hard-to-Reach Parents . . . . . 27
III-7. Gain or Loss of Confidence in Schools as Expressed by Citizens . . . . . 28
III-8. Impressions about Schools among Community Leaders . . . . . 28
III-9. Who Was Responsible for Actions That Built Confidence? . . . . . 29
III-10. Community Leaders' Sources of Confidence at the School-building Level . . . . . 29
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 30

**IV - WHAT THE RESEARCH IS SAYING . . . . . 31**
IV-1. The *Evidence* Series Documenting the Importance of Families in Improving Student Achievement. . . . . 31
IV-2. The Relationship of Parent Training and the At-risk Students' Achievement, Attendance, and Attitudes . . . . . 32
IV-3. Parent Practices that Increase Children's Reading Achievement . . . . . 32
IV-4. The Relationship between Parents' Sense of Competence and Parent Involvement . . . . . 32
IV-5. Benefits of Strong Home-School Partnerships . . . . . 33
IV-6. Other Conclusions about Parent Involvement . . . . . 34
IV-7. Family Interaction and Behavior Associated with High- and Low-Achieving Students . . . . . 35
IV-8. Parent and Teacher Perceptions about Parental Involvement in Schooling . . . . . 35
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 36

**V - A FRAMEWORK FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT . . . . . 37**
V-1. Four Basic Parent Involvement Models . . . . . 38
V-2. Basic Roles of Parents in Their Children's Education . . . . . 41
V-3. Epstein's Types of Parent Involvement and the Role of Schools . . . . . 42
V-4. Rich's MegaSkills . . . . . 43
V-5. Chrispeel's Typology of Home-School Partnership Roles . . . . . 44
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 44

**VI - PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING HOME-SCHOOL BARRIERS . . . . . 45**
VI-1. Basic Principles of Successful Parent Involvement Programs . . . . . 46
VI-2. Fundamentals for Building a Family-School Relationship . . . . . 47
VI-3. Strategies to Reduce Home-School Barriers . . . . . 47
VI-4. Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families . . . . . 48
VI-5. Teacher Norms, Values, and Beliefs Impact Parent Involvement Efforts . . . . . 49
VI-6. Keys to Involving Parents of At-Risk Students . . . . . 50
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 50

**VII - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES . . . . . 51**
VII-1. Factors Complicating Parent Involvement Efforts . . . . . 51
VII-2. Basic Steps in Developing an Effective Family Involvement Program . . . . . 52
VII-3. Case Studies Show Similar Development and Implementation Steps . . . . . 52
VII-4. National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education Recommendations . . . . 53

VII-5. Principals' and Teachers' Roles in Family Involvement Initiatives . . . . . 54
VII-6. Teacher Concerns about Parent Involvement . . . . . 55
VII-7. Teachers' Needs Regarding Parent Involvement . . . . . 56
VII-8. Teachers' Behavior that Impacts Willingness to Involve Families . . . . . 56
VII-9. Parent Involvement Training for School Staff. . . . . 56
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 57

**VIII - BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL . . . . . 58**
VIII-1. Ways to Encourage Two-way Communication Between Home and School . . . 59
VIII-2. The First Letter Home . . . . . 59
VIII-3. Sample Letter to Parents Regarding Homework . . . . . 59
VIII-4. Gaining Insights from Parents about Students' Learning and Behavior . . . . . 60
VIII-5. Gaining Insights from Students into Their Lives Outside of School . . . . . 61
VIII-6. Helpful Tips for Telephoning Parents . . . . . 62
VIII-7. Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere for Parents . . . . . 63
VIII-8. Training Needs for Parent-Teacher Conferences . . . . . 64
VIII-9. Helpful Hints for Successful Conferences . . . . . 64
VIII-10. Listening with Three Ears . . . . . 65
VIII-11. Listening: Some Observations . . . . . 65
Suggested Group Activity. . . . . 65
VIII-12. Invitation to Parent-Teacher Conference with Reply for Parents . . . . . 66
VIII-13. Potential Fears about Volunteers in the Classroom . . . . . 67
VIII-14. Basic Qualifications and Guidelines for Volunteers . . . . . 68
VIII-15. Do's and Don'ts . . . . . 69
VIII-16. Common Mistakes in Recruiting Volunteers . . . . . 69
VIII-17. Avoiding Problems in Recruiting Volunteers . . . . . 70
VIII-18. Seventy-Six Ways Volunteers Can Help at the Elementary School . . . . . 70
VIII-19. Twenty-Five Ways Working People Can Help at School . . . . . 72
VIII-20. Request for Volunteer Assistance . . . . . 73
VIII-21. Teacher Evaluation of the Volunteer Program . . . . . 74
VIII-22. Training Volunteers to Work in the Classroom . . . . . 75
VIII-23. Retention of Volunteer Support . . . . . 75
VIII-24. Home Visits Can Serve a Variety of Goals . . . . . 75
VIII-25. Preparation for a Home Visit . . . . . 76
VIII-26. Tips to Remember When Calling to Establish Rapport . . . . . 76
VIII-27. How to Conduct a Home Visit . . . . . 76
VIII-28. A Laundry List of Do's and Don'ts in the Student's Home . . . . . 77
Suggested Group Activity . . . . . 78

**IX - Closing Thoughts . . . . . 79**
IX-1. Final Exam on Parent and Community Involvement . . . . . 79
IX-2. A Fable about Practically Nothing . . . . . 81

**National Coalition for Parent and Community Involvement in Education . . . . . 83**
**About the Authors. . . . . 87**

# FOREWORD

## Finding a New Fit for the Family, Community, and Schools

Our schools need new ways to think about and foster parental and community involvement in education. To be sure, some schools and communities have dealt successfully with these strains through innovative arrangements for school-family collaborations and various configurations of school-based community services. But, at bottom, little fundamental change has occurred in educators' thinking about the role of school, family, and community.

We hold fast, and not without good reason, to schools' and teachers' hard-won autonomy. We see only supporting roles for parents and communities in the education of children—expanded roles, perhaps, but supporting all the same. We are ambivalent about taking on more community responsibilities, especially when societal problems are growing, and community organizations—churches, youth organizations, settlement houses, and so forth—are in even more difficulty than schools.

Most of all, we yearn for the good old days of the 1950s and '60s, when newly educated and affluent parents in burgeoning communities presented us with both the baby boom and unparalleled financial support.

We must put that nostalgic vision behind us. Like most 'good old days,' it was not as great as our memory suggests—ask poor or minority people how they remember it. And it will never happen again; too much sweeping change has occurred in families, schools, and communities even to imagine it.

We must develop a new perspective, and it must rest on three challenging propositions:

- schools cannot succeed nowadays (or, to put it more strongly, schools will fail) without the collaboration of parents and communities;
- families need unprecedentedly strong support to become and remain functional; and
- communities must take charge of all the developmental needs of their children.

It will be difficult and painful to assent fully to these propositions. Building up families and communities will ultimately strengthen education, to be sure, but the process may be tumultuous to the extent that it will involve parents and community leaders claiming prerogatives and assuming new roles in realms of school activity that educators now solely exercise.

It will mean, for example, collaborative curricula and pedagogical decisions affecting both schools and individual students. It may mean giving up ownership of facilities or at least sharing them more widely. It also may mean more limited autonomy for school districts and boards. It will involve discarding our long-held stereotypical views of how families function, and learning how to take today's families on their own, rather than the school's terms.

This challenge must call forth bravery, above all. But the outcome will be more than worth it—a community crusade for children with schools that are redesigned and reinvigorated.

*P. Michael Timpane*
*Vice President and Senior Scholar*
*Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*
*Princeton, New Jersey*

# I - INTRODUCTION

The premise of providing training for teachers and other educators in a content area called "home-school-community involvement" is obvious: schools don't operate in a vacuum. If people who work in schools expect to be successful in their primary mission of educating the community's children, they need to know a great deal about the community and the families from which the children come.

Like many things in public education, that proposition is not as simple as it sounds. For one, no two communities are exactly alike. For another, different communities influence schools in different ways. And finally, communities and families are constantly changing in a variety of ways, some of them highly gratifying and others thoroughly discouraging.

The past decade has been challenging indeed for public educators. They have been chastised for rising dropout rates and falling test scores; for a shortage of good teachers; and for a surplus of public school graduates who lack basic skills. The crisis in confidence has been more painful and prolonged than the one that followed the Soviet launch of Sputnik, and there are no men-on-the-moon in training.

The urge for a quick fix has been almost irresistible. In a frantic search for easy answers, some critics have been willing to overlook an inconvenient but undeniable fact: educational problems reflect community and family problems in all their complexity, diversity, and intractability. In too many communities, children are hungry, sick, abused, or neglected.

Of course we need strong schools, literate and law-abiding youth, and competitive workers for the new global economy. The goal of improving public schools is about as controversial as motherhood and apple pie. But the facts are that most taxpayers no longer have children in public schools and that many taxpayers no longer trust public educators to spend their tax dollars wisely. Public school teachers and administrators who ignore skeptical taxpayers and the almost 80 percent of households without children do so at their own peril. They will pay a heavy price as public support erodes further in the years ahead. And school systems that do not develop policies and programs to involve families and communities as educational allies will not make much progress in their reform efforts.

Is it possible to restore public confidence in our unique American system of free public education for all? That is the question and the challenge. We must begin by defining the essential role of home and community, with an assessment of where we are now in terms of understanding that role.

## TOPICAL OUTLINES

Following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or by educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

## I-1. School Is Out—Learning Is In

Why is this? Why has a decade of reform produced so little? Perhaps it is, in part, because our current educational practices are bound by time, place, efficiency, and teachers themselves. For example:

- The system is *time-bound* by credit hours and semester courses. Excellent teachers know that learning is not constrained to one-hour meetings, and they have been frustrated in teaching withing these prescribed boundaries.

- The system is *place-bound*. Learning is initiated, nurtured, monitored, and certified primarily by teachers in classrooms. Distance education is a nontraditional delivery system for traditional education. Work-based learning is built around the structure of the school; it still binds the student to a place.

- The system is *efficiency-bound*. Our model of education reflects in great part the adjustment to an agricultural economy. When the country changed to the industrial economy, education responded by creating lock-step, put-them-in boxes, factory model—the basis of American education today. Academic credit, based on time in class, makes learning appear orderly. The entire system of schooling is based on grades accumulated as credits.

- The system is *teacher-bound*, which may be its greatest weakness. In education, we make the assumption that one human being, the teacher, can ensure that 30 very different human beings, one hour a day, three or more days a week for sixteen weeks, can learn enough to become enlightened citizens, productive workers, and joyful lifelong learners. Then we assume that this one human being can repeat this miracle three more times in the same 16-week period for 90 additional individuals. Furthermore, we have saddled teachers with the expectations that they must be experts in rapidly-expanding fields of knowledge and gifted lecturers. And we provide little comfort and support when they fail to live up to the myth.

Thus, we need to replace the current education system with a system designed for the kind of society in which we live today, designed for the kinds of students who attend school today, and designed to take advantage of what we know about learning and what we know about technology today.

SOURCE: O'Banion, T. "School Is Out—Learning Is In," *On the Horizon*, 3(5), June/July 1995.

## I-2. The Emerging Transformation to Place Learning First

The emerging transformation in education places learning first, before teaching. The new transformation is based on the following guidelines:

- *The purpose of school is to improve and expand student learning.*
  - Students want to learn. Students learn differently. They learn from each other.
  - They need customized learning, learning that offers many options, including stand-alone technology and opportunities to learn outside as well as inside "school."

- All students need a preK-90 system, for learning is lifelong and continuous. They need a system that allows them access 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The system must provide road maps, itineraries, optional routes, tours, rest stops for feedback, opportunities to make new connections, and access to major databases and expert systems throughout the world. They must be allowed to change directions, to move back and forth, to make U-turns for remediation, and to call for assistance when they hit roadblocks.

- *Student assessment is critical.*
  - Teachers, staff, and administrators must pay more attention to assessing student abilities, achievements, values, goals, expectations, and environmental limitations.
  - Students need learning portfolios about what they know, what they don't know, what they want to know, and what they need to know.
  - Standards for initial entry into and exit from all formal learning activities must be clearly articulated.
  - Learning outcomes must focus on "What does this student know?" and "What can this student do?"
- *Faculty and staff roles must change.*
  - Teachers must design and manage, not deliver, learning experiences.
  - They must be evaluated on how well they implement new learning opportunities for students in a system that is not time-bound, place-bound, efficiency-bound, or teacher-bound.

SOURCE: O'Banion, T. "School Is Out—Learning Is In," *On the Horizon*, 3(5), June/July 1995.

## I-3. Forces of Resistance

As the tentative guidelines for the emerging transformation in education that places learning first are translated into action, there will be resistance from bureaucracies, from school personnel, and from students themselves.

- *Bureaucratic resistance.*
  - Federal and state programs are difficult to dismantle, as every newly elected politician soon learns.
  - Schools have developed cumbersome and often politically-structured systems. While these are designed for effective, efficient, and fair management, they frequently inhibit rather than encourage creative ventures that differ from the established norms.
- *Personnel resistance.*
  - Most educators understand the old adage "It is easier to move a cemetery than change the curriculum."
  - Educators, themselves "schooled" first as students, then as gatekeepers in the traditions of education, do not embrace alternative ideas with enthusiasm, despite their own cynicism about the current system.

- Administrators, especially first-line administrators, are most resistant to change. Their position is particularly stressful as they attempt to negotiate between the faculty and the administration, a land in which first-line administrators can find no safe haven or affiliate group.
- Secretaries, custodians, and other support staff who operate key components of the school's infrastructure will resist changes that make them more visible partners with the professional staff.

- *Student resistance.*
  - The greatest resistance to placing learning first may come from students (and their parents). Students know classes; they know schedules; and they know about grades, especially getting A's.
  - Placing learning first would mean taking responsibility for learning and navigating their own pathway.
  - Students will need a great deal of orientation to this new paradigm, and they will need early successes.

SOURCE: O'Banion, T. "School Is Out—Learning Is In." *On the Horizon*, 3(5), June July 1995.

## I-4. Learning and School Environments

There is mounting evidence that many characteristics of the physical designed environment of schools can and does affect attitudes, behaviors, and academic achievement. Some of these effects result from a direct impact of the building environment on education, while others are indirect linkages between architectural characteristics and intervening psychological, physiological, and behavioral factors like cognitive fatigue, distraction, motivation, emotional affect, anxiety, or communication. The bottom line is that a well-designed and well-maintained facility can, and does, make a difference in our children's lives. However...

- There is a crisis in America's school buildings.
  - Nationwide, 74 percent of school buildings were built before 1970.
  - 12 percent are considered inadequate, because they are too old, too small, have deteriorating mechanical systems, and/or seriously need window replacement.
- Studies show that student attitudes about education are a direct reflection of the quality of their learning environment.
- Many professional educators and others understand that the physical characteristics of schools can directly influence learning, while others ignore this connection.

Research results of studies of the quality of the physical environment of educational facilities show that it does matter to the process of learning and educational achievement.

- Architectural features affect learning.
  - Thermal factors affect task performance, attention spans, and achievement.
  - Short-term noise and poor acoustics are linked to classroom distraction and to lower student and teacher morale.

- Long-term noise from nearby streets leads to significant increases in blood pressure, decreased concentration, increased errors on difficult tasks, and greater likelihood of giving up on complex tasks.
- Spatial density and crowding increase behavioral problems, aggressive behavior, distraction on complex tasks, and decreased satisfaction.
- Classroom furniture layouts influence persistence, participation, and attitudes toward class and other students.
- Windowless classrooms lead to more negative student and teacher attitudes.
- Private or secluded study spaces reduce visual and auditory interruptions, increase privacy, contribute to longer attention spans, lead to more student questions, make learning materials more accessible, and increase literature use.

• Small schools are better.
  - Relative to large schools (1,500 or more students), smaller schools (around 500 students) offer more opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and to exercise leadership roles.
  - Student satisfaction is higher, participation in student organizations is greater, crime levels are lower, and student misconduct is less serious in small schools.
  - Other things held constant, more classes are taken per student, math and verbal ability is higher, and overall student achievement is higher in smaller schools.
  - Smaller schools benefit African-American and urban students in particular.

• Smaller class sizes and lower class density are better.
  - As class size decreases, voluntary participation increases, classroom management improves, student attitudes improve, teacher stress decreases, and teachers are more likely to try innovative teaching techniques.
  - Conversely, high density conditions have been found to lead to increased aggression, decreased social interaction, and greater non-involvement.
  - As class size decreases (e.g., around 15 students with 1 teacher), students outperform matched groups of students in larger class sizes (over 20 per class) on all subjects, but especially in reading and mathematics (average improvements of 15%). These results are the same even when the larger classes have the additional benefit of a full-time teacher aide.
  - The findings are consistent for all K-3 grade levels and in rural, urban, suburban, and inner-city locations.
  - Follow-up studies show that students in smaller class sizes in the early primary grades still have significant advantages two years later. Performance gains in different schools ranged from 11-34%, with the greatest gains being for inner-city and minority students.

SOURCE: Moore, G. T. "Learning and School Environments," *Edutopia*, 3(1), Summer 1995.

## I-5. Education's Misleading Myths

Myths about the American public schools may be misleading the majority of citizens and undermining the confidence of the American people in our schools.

- MYTH 1. Today's youth do not seem as smart as recent generations.
  FACT: Today's students actually average about 15 IQ points higher than their grandparents did, and average about 7 points higher than their parents.

- MYTH 2. Today's youth cannot think as well as recent generations.
  FACT: The large gains in measured intelligence throughout the industrialized world have not been in the areas of the tests that call for general knowledge, or for verbal or quantitative ability. The major gains in intelligence test performance have been primarily in the areas of general problem-solving skills and the ability to handle abstract information of a decontextualized nature—in the areas generally labeled "thinking skills."

- MYTH 3. The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) has shown a marked decrease in mean score over the last 25 years, indicating the failure of our schools and our teachers in performing their function.
  FACT: Although, since 1965 there has been a decline in the average SAT score for our nation's youth, the explanation for this loss is simple—a much greater number of students in the bottom 60 percent of their class have been taking the SAT since the 1960s.

- MYTH 4. The bottom students now score better on achievement tests, but there has been a decrease in the performance of the better students. Our top students are not as proficient as they were.
  FACT: The SAT performance of all test takers between 1975 and 1990 is unusually stable over this time period. But if from the overall pool of test takers, we separate the performance of students from 1975 to 1990 who match those who formerly took the SAT test (primarily white, suburban, middle and upper middle class, higher school rank, etc.) we see an increase of over 30 SAT points, an increase of over 10 percentile ranks compared to the overall and undifferentiated group of SAT takers.

- MYTH 5. The performance of American students on standardized achievement tests reveals gross inadequacies.
  FACT: Scientists reviewing the National Assessment of Educational Progress test, given to a national sample of 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds in the subject matters of mathematics, science, reading, writing, geography, and computer skills, believe unequivocally that the national data does not indicate a decline in any area, and that students today appear to be as well educated as previous generations of students.

- MYTH 6. Money is unrelated to the productivity of schools.
  FACT: States that have spent the most on their schools have produced American citizens who have earned the most dollars in income; also higher salaries attract teaching candidates with higher academic ability and higher salaries keep those teachers in the profession longer.

- MYTH 7. The American public school system is a bloated bureaucracy, top heavy in administrators and administrative costs.
  FACT: The average number of employees that each administrator supervises in education is among the highest of any industry or business in the U.S.; central office professionals plus principals, assistant principals, and supervisors comprise 4.5 percent of the total employee population of the schools.

- MYTH 8. American schools are too expensive. We spend more on education than any other country in the world, and we have little to show for it.
  FACT: In 1988 dollars, we ranked ninth among 16 industrialized nations in per-pupil expenditures in grades K-12—14 percent less than Germany, 30 percent less than Japan, and 51 percent less than Switzerland. If we were to come up to the average percentage of per capita income of the 16 other industrialized nations, we would have to invest an additional $20 billion per year in K-12 education.

- MYTH 9. Our high schools, colleges, and universities are not supplying us with enough mathematicians and scientists to maintain our competitiveness in world markets.
  FACT: There is solid data to suggest that the supply is exceeding the demand; when demand as well as supply is investigated, it shows that the economy is now able to absorb all the scientists and engineers that we produce.

- MYTH 10. The United States is an enormous failure in the international comparisons of educational achievement.
  FACT: According to many visitors to the U.S., we have some of the most creative and spontaneous children the world has ever seen and these students do go on to more challenging schooling at the college level, in numbers that are the envy of the world.

- MYTH 11. American productivity has fallen and a major factor in that is the education of the work force.
  FACT: According to the 1992 report of one of our nation's most prestigious management consulting firms, there has been no decline in American productivity, although it is true that productivity in other countries has grown at a faster rate than ours. However, their productivity was historically low and their rates of increase are not nearly as steep as they approach our rate of productivity. In addition, when the various factors that can influence productivity of a nation are examined—market conditions, labor unions, government regulations, management behavior, available capital, skill of the labor force, etc—the only variable that predicted productivity across nations in the

survey was behavior of management; the educational level of the labor force was unrelated to productivity.

A FINAL NOTE: We have troubled schools. But in those school populations, we see poverty, inadequate health care, dysfunctional families, and dysfunctional neighborhoods.

SOURCE: Berliner, D. C. "Education's Present Misleading Myths Undermine Confidence in One of America's Most Cherished Institutions," *Journal of Educational Public Relations*, 15(2) December 1993.

## I-6. Ten Truths of Parent Involvement

- All parents have hopes and goals for their children. They differ in how they support their children's efforts to achieve those goals.
- The home is one of several spheres that simultaneously influence a child. The school must work with other spheres for the child's benefit, not push them apart.
- The parent is the chief contributor to a child's education. Schools can either co-opt the parent's role or recognize the parent's potential.
- Parent involvement must be a legitimate element of education. It deserves equal emphasis with such elements as program improvement and evaluation.
- Parent involvement is a process, not a program of activities. It requires ongoing energy and effort.
- Parent involvement requires a vision, policy, and a framework. A consensus of understanding is important.
- Parents' interaction with their own children is the cornerstone of involvement. A program must recognize the value, diversity, and difficulty of this role.
- Most barriers to parent involvement are found with school practices. They are not found within parents.
- Any parent can be "hard to reach." Parents must be approached individually; they are not defined by gender, ethnicity, family situation, education, or income.
- Successful parent involvement nurtures relationships and partnerships. It strengthens bonds between home and school, parent and educator, parent and child, and school and community.

SOURCE: National Community Education Association, Conference handout, 1994.

## I-7. School-Community Issues: An Attitudinal Survey

*Instructions:* The following statements are designed to gather opinions regarding school-community issues. Indicate your response by circling one of the following responses: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD).

1. Schools should be more involved in delivering social services. SA A N D SD
2. Teachers should be encouraged to visit the homes of their students. SA A N D SD
3. Parents should be encouraged to visit their children's classrooms. SA A N D SD

4. Home and community environments may be more important determinants of academic achievement than the school environment. SA A N D SD
5. School buildings should serve as before- and after-school and year-round community centers. SA A N D SD
6. A danger of involving community members in the schools is that ultimately they will want to control them. SA A N D SD
7. Volunteers are of limited value in schools. SA A N D SD
8. Special-interest groups create difficulties for schools. SA A N D SD
9. Almost all school systems have effective programs and activities that facilitate home-school-community communication. SA A N D SD
10. Community members should be part of the decision-making mechanism in the school. SA A N D SD
11. Teachers should be empowered to make curriculum and instructional decisions. SA A N D SD

SOURCE: Decker, L. E. Class handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

### Suggested Group Activity

For an in-service activity or class, have everyone complete the above survey. Then, taking one question at a time, have individuals indicate their responses by a show of hands. Ask those who indicated SA or A to give the rationale for their response and then do the same with those who responded D or SD. To avoid a heated debate, ask to hear only one side of the issue at a time.

### I-8. Understanding Your Community

In order to work effectively in a community, you need to know:

- Population data and characteristics.
- Customs and traditions.
- Political system characteristics and organization.
- Communications channels.
- Significant community groups and organizations.
- Economic conditions.
- Patterns of employment/unemployment.
- Political structures and power brokers (both formal and informal).
- Social structures, tensions, and problems that affect the learner and the school.
- Community resources and services.
- School-community interrelationships.
- Geographic strengths and weaknesses.

SOURCE: Decker, L. E. Class handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## I-9. America's Smallest School: The Family

While it has long been recognized that family environment does impact a child's educational achievement, school personnel often fail to take this into consideration when working with the children entering today's schools. *America's Smallest School: The Family* provides a reminder of just how important the family can be in helping a child succeed:

- Students living with both parents have higher proficiency in school, even after controlling for other key factors.
- The more types of reading materials there are in the home, the higher students are in reading proficiency.
- Students who do more reading at home are better readers.
- Students who watch a lot of TV have lower academic proficiency.
- The amount of homework done by students has been shown to be positively related to achievement.
- Student absence is directly correlated to decreased academic achievement.
- The amount parents talk about school and assume an active role in school matters is directly correlated to student achievement.
- Income and resources in the home account substantially for children's success in school.

SOURCE: Barton, P. E. and Coley, R. J. *America's Smallest School: The Family*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. 1992.

## I-10. The Leverage of the Nine Percent

The school consumes a surprisingly small portion of American children's lives. Since most schools still operate about 180 days a year and students are in class six hours per day, the young person who graduates from high school will have spent just nine percent of his/her life under a school roof. What is the Leverage of the Nine Percent?

- When the other 91 percent works at cross-purposes?
- When out-of-school conditions are hostile?
- When other agencies don't carry their share of the responsibility?
- When a child's tangled problems exceed his/her capability, especially where the home situation is itself destructive?

SOURCE: Finn C. E. Jr. We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future cited in Chimerine, C.B.; Panton, K.L.; and Russo, A.W.W. *The Other 91 Percent: Strategies to Improve the Quality of Out-of-School Experiences of Chapter 1 Students*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. 1993.

## I-11. Why the Focus on Parent and Community Involvement in the Education of Children

A confluence of several forces has helped generate the current interest in school reform and the focus on parent/community involvement as one critical reform strategy.

- Demographic projections of student composition and student needs in the twenty-first century;
- Arguments about the necessity to transform the American economy and the role of schools in raising workforce skills;
- The rising social costs that poor school performance and resulting low skills impose; and
- The renewed vision and practice of advocates and progressive reformers.

SOURCE: Fruchter, N.; Galletta, A.; and White, J. L. *New Directions in Parent Involvement.* Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development. 1992.

## II. DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS INFLUENCING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Not so long ago, public schools first encountered children when they were five or six years old. What these little ones had experienced over the preceding years was assumed to be benign and appeared to be of little interest to teachers and administrators. Now, every educator is acutely aware of the critical importance of a child's early years, even while acknowledging that public institutions can't control everything that happens to a child between birth and kindergarten. What schools can do is *help*, by working with parents and families as early as possible, trying to improve family literacy and parenting skills and to build strong, positive relationships between families and schools.

Even a brief examination of the demographics of American society at the end of the 20th century shows the enormity of the challenge educators face. Most striking, perhaps, is the growth in the incidence of poverty in the youngest segments of our population. The Children's Defense Fund points out regularly that all age groups of our children are poorer today than they were at the beginning of the decade, and that between now and the year 2000, the growth in child population will consist of children living in poverty.

Reliable research has demonstrated the link between poverty and the patterns of behavior associated with school failure. Fortunately, research has also shown that there *are* things schools can do, working with the home and community, to improve school performance, and therefore, the life chances of all children.

The first step is to develop a thorough knowledge of the community's demographics and an understanding of how they affect the work of the public educator. That is the focus of this unit.

### TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

## II-1. U.S. Population Growth and Decline

(By age, from 1980 to 1990)

Age Groups That Got Larger

| | |
|---|---|
| 35 to 44 | +33.8% |
| 85 and over | +28.0% |
| 75 to 84 | +20.3% |
| 25 to 34 | +16.8% |
| 65 to 74 | +13.4% |
| under 5 | +11.6% |
| 45 to 54 | + 2.1% |
| 55 to 64 | + 1.5% |

Age Groups That Got Smaller

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 to 13 | - 1.1% |
| 18 to 24 | - 9.7% |
| 14 to 17 | -11.0% |

SOURCE: Hodgkinson, H. *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1989.

## II-2. The Traditional American Family, 1955-1992

1955 60% of households in U.S. consisted of a traditional family:
- •Working father and housewife mother
- •Two or more school-age children

1980 11% of U.S. households consisted of a traditional family.

1985 7% of U.S. households consisted of a traditional family.

1992 6% of U.S. households consisted of a traditional family.

Of every 100 children born in 1986:
- The parents of 40 will divorce before the children are 18.
- 12 were born out of wedlock.
- 2 will have a parent die before the children reach 18.
- Only 41 will reach 18 living with the two original parents.

SOURCE: Hodgkinson, H. *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1989.

## II-3. Changes in Household Type, 1980-1990

| | 1990 Number of Households (thousands) | 1980-90 % Change |
|---|---|---|
| Total households | 93,347 | +15.5% |
| Married couples, no children* | 27,780 | +15.0% |
| Married couples w/ children* | 24,537 | - 1.7% |
| Single parent* — women | 6,599 | +21.2% |
| Single parent* — men | 1,153 | +87.2% |
| Singles living alone | 22,999 | +25.7% |
| Singles living with non-relatives | 4,258 | +45.3% |

*Children under age 18

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey: Household and Family Characteristics*, Washington, DC, 1991.

## II-4. Disappearing Dads

| Kids Living With | 1960 | 1980 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Father and mother | 80.6% | 62.3% | 57.7% |
| Mother only | 7.7 | 18.0 | 21.6 |
| Father only | 1.0 | 1.7 | 3.1 |
| Father and stepmother | 0.8 | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Mother and stepfather | 5.9 | 8.4 | 10.4 |
| Neither parent | 3.9 | 5.8 | 4.3 |

Source: Blankenhorn, D. *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

## II-5. Projections of the U.S. Population age 0-17, 1990-2010

(millions)

| Youth | 1990 | 2010 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total youth* | 64.4 | 64.9 | +0.5 |
| White, non-Hispanic | 45.2 | 41.4 | -3.8 |
| Hispanic (of any race) | 7.2 | 9.8 | +2.6 |
| Black** | 10.2 | 11.4 | +1.2 |
| Other races | 2.2 | 2.8 | +0.6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Increase in total nonwhite youth | +4.4 million |
| Decrease in total white youth | -3.8 million |

*May not add exactly because of rounding.

**Includes small number of Hispanics;
"other races" are primarily Asian and Native American.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, *Youth Indicators*, Washington, DC, 1991.

## II-6. Vulnerable Family Index

In 1990, 1,689,118 families were formed with the birth of a first baby. Many of these families were at risk from the start for one or more reasons.

- The mother was under 20 when she had her first baby.
- The mother had not completed high school when her first child was born.
- The parents of the first baby were unmarried.

Of the new families formed in 1990:

- 11% had all three risk factors.
- 24% had two risk factors.
- 45% had at least one risk factor.

Children in Poverty (Ages 7-12, 1988) by Number of Risk Factors

- All three risk factors 79%
- Two risk factors 48%
- One risk factor 26%
- No risk factors 8%

Children in Lower Half of School Class (Ages 7-12, 1988) by Number of Risk Factors

- All three risk factors 58%
- Two risk factors 53%
- One risk factor 47%
- No risk factors 30%

SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Data Book*. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1993.

## II-7. The Children of Single-Parent Families

| Of children who live with: | Unmarried Mothers | Divorced Mothers | Both Parents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children in poverty | 63% | 34% | 11% |
| Repeated a grade in school | 33% | 23% | 13% |
| Suspended or expelled | 17% | 11% | 5% |
| In families on welfare for more than 10 years | 39% | 14% | n/a |

Of children in correctional facilities, 56% had lived with one parent, 28% with both parents.

SOURCE: "The War Over Family Values," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 8, 1992, 35.

## II-8. Children and Families

- Of all children born today, 23% are born outside of marriage.
- 15.3 million children live with one parent, the mother in 90% of cases:
  - -50% of white children live with a divorced mother.
  - -54% of black children live with a never-married mother.
  - -23% of Hispanic children's mothers are unmarried.
- Today, 40% of the poor are children; poverty for children aged 0-5 (now 23% of all young children) is increasing; and the increase is directly related to the fact that children are in a one parent, female-headed household.
  - -Average income for married couples with children is $36,206.
  - -Average income for female-headed households with children is $11,299.
- Regardless of race, poor young women are three to four times more likely to become unwed mothers than are affluent young women. Early childbearing is highly correlated with lower educational attainment and unemployment.

SOURCE: William T. Grant Foundation, *Youth and America's Future: A Statistical Snapshot*. Washington, DC: Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship, June 1987; Hodgkinson, H. *The Same Client*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1989.

## II-9. SAT Scores by Family Income

| | SAT Averages | |
|---|---|---|
| Family Income | Verbal | Math |
| Less than $10,000 | 353 | 415 |
| $10,000 - $20,000 | 379 | 434 |
| $20,000 - $30,000 | 404 | 452 |
| $30,000 - $40,000 | 418 | 466 |
| $40,000 - $50,000 | 430 | 480 |
| $50,000 - $60,000 | 440 | 491 |
| $60,000 - $70,000 | 449 | 500 |
| More than $70,000 | 469 | 528 |

SOURCE: *U.S. News & World Report*, September 9, 1991.

## II-10. Household Income in 1990 Dollars

| Income Category | 1980 | 1990 | %Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Poorest Fifth | $7,357 | $6,973 | -5.2 |
| Next Poorest Fifth | 16,008 | 16,124 | +0.2 |
| Middle Fifth | 24,031 | 24,691 | +2.7 |
| Next Richest Fifth | 32,075 | 34,824 | +8.6 |
| Richest Fifth | 58,886 | 78,032 | +32.5 |

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office, Washington, DC, 1990.

## Suggested Group Activity

Given the research evidence that clearly indicates the powerful influence that the family can have on student achievement, what are some policies and programs that schools could and should adopt to strengthen and encourage the family role in enhancing student academic achievement?

## II-11. Demographic Issues for the Year 2000

- What is "majority"? What is "minority"? The distinction is becoming a socio-economic issue, not a race issue.

- By the year 2000, one third of all children will be economically disadvantaged.

- The support base for education is eroding:
  - Only 20% of U. S. households have school-aged children.
  - American society is aging (the phenomenon of "grey power").

- Education systems need proactive outreach efforts to connect community with education.

- Potential for intergenerational conflict:
  - In 1940, there were 17 workers for every Social Security recipient.
  - In 1990, there were 3 workers for every Social Security recipient.
  - In 2000, there will be only 2 workers for every Social Security recipient.

- More coordinated social services will be needed, and schools will be required to fill voids.

- Growing numbers of working women will mean a growing need for comprehensive child-care services.

- Public education must be viewed as a right and a responsibility of all citizens. This will require a broader definition of education.

SOURCE: Decker, L. E. Class handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## II-12. Growing Up Is Risky Business and Schools Are Not to Blame

What causes risk:

- Personal pain
- Academic failure
- Family tragedy
- Family socio-economic situation
- Family instability

Helping students at risk:

- Understanding
- Caring
- Cultivating a sense of responsibility
- Nurturing academic achievement and skills

SOURCE: "Growing Up Is Risky Business and Schools Are Not to Blame," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 1990.

## II-13. PDK/Gallup Poll - Grading the Public Schools

The annual PDK/Gallup Poll has become a primary source for measuring public attitude toward the Public Schools. The 1993 poll registered the largest one-year improvement in the grades given by the public to their local public schools since the question was first asked in 1974. The percentage of respondents awarding A's or B's jumped from 40% in 1992 to 47% in 1993, after nearly a decade of relative stability. College graduates in particular gave high ratings (54% A or B).

The question: Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here - A, B, C, D, or FAIL?

## Ratings Given to the Local Public Schools

| Grade | National Totals | No Children in Schools | Public School Parents | Nonpublic School Parents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| A & B | 47 | 44 | 56 | 37 |
| A | 10 | 10 | 12 | 5 |
| B | 37 | 34 | 44 | 32 |
| C | 31 | 32 | 28 | 41 |
| D | 11 | 10 | 12 | 9 |
| FAIL | 4 | 4 | 4 | 11 |
| Don't Know | 7 | 10 | * | 2 |

* Less than one-half of 1%.

RATINGS GIVEN TO THE LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

| | 1993 % | 1992 % | 1991 % | 1990 % | 1989 % | 1988 % | 1987 % | 1986 % | 1985 % | 1984 % | 1983 % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A & B | 47 | 40 | 42 | 41 | 43 | 40 | 43 | 41 | 43 | 42 | 31 |
| A | 10 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 6 |
| B | 37 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 31 | 31 | 30 | 34 | 32 | 25 |
| C | 31 | 33 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 34 | 30 | 28 | 30 | 35 | 32 |
| D | 11 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 13 |
| Fail | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| Don't Know | 7 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 8 | 17 |

Poll respondents were also asked to grade the *nation's* public schools. As has been true in all past years, the "nation's schools" came off a poor second to "local schools" in the current poll. Whereas 47% of the public thought their own schools merit either an A or a B, only 19% awarded these grades to schools of the nation as a whole.

SOURCE: Elam, S. M.; Rose, L. C., and Gallup, A. M. *The 25th Annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Polls of the Public Attitudes towards the Public Schools.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993.

## II-14. Summary of *A Look at Tomorrow*

- In 2010, four states (New York, Texas, California, and Florida) will have about one third of the nation's youth, and more than half of them will be "minority." The *real* minority will be non-Hispanic white youth in these key states. What will we call "minorities" when they make up more than half the population? And how will these states interact with Maine, which will have 3 percent minority youth in 2010?

- In the 1960s, housing moved to the suburbs. In the 1980s, so did everything else: jobs, churches, colleges, movies, and shopping. How can cities survive if we define success as moving to a suburb? What would it take to get middle income people to move back to the cities? Many "urban" problems—crime, drugs, poverty, violence—will continue to spread to the suburbs. How can we govern a metro area which includes both cities and their now-dominant suburbs?

- Currently 82 percent of all children have working mothers. Business and government must respond to the rapidly increasing demand for child care. Sixty percent of all children will spend some time with a single parent before reaching age 18, making the single parent family the new "typical American family."

- The U.S. population is aging rapidly. There are currently 30 million people over age 65, increasing to 65 million by 2020. Many will have one year of retirement for every year of work. Children under age 18 (34 percent of our population in 1970) will be 25 percent of the total population in 2000.Yet, even as children are becoming increasingly scarce, approximately 30 percent of children in 1992 are at serious risk of failure in school and in life.

- With the establishment of sizable populations of middle class blacks, Hispanics, and Asians, many racial problems are actually issues of race *and* class. The single factor that holds the most children back is poverty, regardless of race.

- The U.S. population increased 10 percent between 1980 and 1990; the prison population exploded by 139 percent. Prisoners cost taxpayers more than $20,000 per individual annually, and 80 percent are high school dropouts. We now lead the world in the percentage of our population behind bars. One prisoner consumes the amount of money it would cost to enroll *six* children in Head Start programs.

- The "middle" of our society is declining, while the numbers of rich and poor are increasing. We are creating two workforces: one in minimum-wage jobs, the other in well-paying jobs. For every new job created for a computer programmer, eight new jobs are created for food service workers. This leads to an "information-rich" and "information-poor" split in our society.

- Those who are concerned about the test scores of U.S. students compared to the test scores of Asian students should compare the test scores of U.S. inner city students to the test scores of U.S. suburban students.

SOURCE: Hodgkinson, H. *A Demographic Look at Tomorrow*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992.

### Suggested Group Activity

- You are part of a task force in your school system brought together to look at the demographic trends in your community. Identify the five most critical demographic factors and project how they will impact the educational programs in your schools for the next 3-5 years.

- Discuss the implications of fewer students and more poor students who are at risk for the workforce of the year 2000.

- Given the national demographic trends presented, project what the demographics of your community will be like in the year 2000. What are the implications for schools and schooling?

## RECOMMENDED READING


Children's Defense Fund. *Falling by the Wayside: Children in Rural America*, 1992.

Children's Defense Fund. *The State of America's Children*, 1991.

Elam, S. M.; Rose, L. C., and Gallup, A. M. *The 25th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of the Public Attitudes Towards the Public Schools*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1993.

Hodgkinson, H. *A Demographic Look at Tomorrow*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1992.

Hodgkinson, H. *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems*. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1989.

National Center for Children in Poverty. *Five Million Children: A Statistical Profile of Our Poorest Young Citizens*. New York, NY: Columbia University, 1993.

Wilhoit, G. "The Demand of Demographics," *Community Education Journal*, XV, 4 (July 1988).

## III. CHANGING ATTITUDES

Not too long ago, many parents and educators shared the opinion that once a child enters school, it is best to leave education to the professionals. After all, the argument went, they are the ones trained to do this job. Besides, the structure of modern curricula is probably too complex for most parents to grasp (remember the New Math?). And what about the parents who can barely read or write—how could they help their children learn anything?

Now we know otherwise. Although our common sense may have whispered it all along, the research has become overwhelmingly clear: parent involvement—and that means all kinds of parents—improves student achievement.

Parent involvement is now a major component of most efforts to restructure schools. Parental roles took on heightened status in the 1980s due in part to the school effectiveness movement, the implementation of site-based management in some schools, the issue of school choice, and a growing body of research demonstrating that parent involvement has a significant impact on student achievement.

Additional impetus was provided at the national level by *America 2000, An Education Strategy*. In 1990, former President George Bush and the nation's governors met to adopt a national agenda for education reform. The resulting "America 2000 " strategy was continued and expanded under the Clinton administration, with the new name "Goals 2000." Goals 2000 added two more goals which focus on teacher training and the importance of parental involvement. They read:

- All teachers will have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prepare U.S. students for the next century.
- Every school will promote parental involvement in their children's education.

While it is clear that no one group can deal with the myriad of problems children face today, schools are being challenged to take a leadership role. Harold Hodgkinson poses the challenge to schools in the form of two questions:

- What can educators do that they are not already doing...to get [children] achieving well in a school setting?
- How can educators collaborate more closely with other service providers so they all work together to provide services to children and families?

The key to answering these questions lies in using and redefining the concept of "we." In the context of education, the "we" is the home, school, and community working together in the framework of a democratic society. The challenge is not to divvy up the responsibilities, but to reconceptualize the role of schools and relationships among the school, the home, the community, and the larger society.

### TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

## III-1. Characteristics of Effective Schools

- Instructional leadership by principal and staff.
- Clear school mission.
- Opportunity to learn and student time on task.
- High expectations.
- Frequent monitoring of student progress and program effectiveness.
- Positive, safe, orderly learning environment.
- Positive home-school relations.

Source: Canady, L. Lecture. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. May 1995.

## III-2. A Comparison of Family Practices and Schools Factors That Contribute to a Child's School Success

The following table illustrates the similarity between family practices that contribute to a child's success in school and school factors that contribute to increased student achievement.

| Family Practices which Support Children's Learning | Effective Schools Characteristics which Parallel Family Practices |
|---|---|
| Playing games<br>Reading and listening to children read<br>Encouraging hobbies<br>Visiting parks, museums, cultural events<br>Talking with children about school events | Opportunity to learn<br>Time on task<br>Leadership |
| Supervising TV viewing<br>Guiding homework<br>Setting daily routines and schedules<br>Supervising after school activities | Leadership<br>Monitoring progress<br>Use of time |
| Visiting the school<br>Advocating for child's needs | Home-school relations |
| Expressing affection, love<br>Praising child for school and home work<br>Providing for food, clothing, shelter<br>Assigning chores<br>Organizing productive after school activities | Safe, positive learning environment |
| Stimulating intellectual pursuits<br>Modeling reading, writing, math, other intellectual activities | Academic focus |
| Holding high aspirations<br>Expecting high school graduation and college attendance | High expectations |

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J. *Using an Effective Schools Framework to Building Home-School Partnerships for Student Success.* Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, University of Wisconsin, 1992.

### III-3. Personal Experiences that Influence Attitudes Toward Schools

Several factors impact the public's attitudes toward schools. Many of these are based on people's past personal experiences with the school, positive and negative. The following are some of the ways in which people have personal experiences with schools.

- Own experiences as former students.
- First impressions of a new school.
- The reception received at school.
- First contact when there is a problem.
- Immediacy of response to parental concerns.
- A child's success or lack of success.
- Experience serving as a volunteer.
- Teacher contact or lack of contact.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Parent group meetings.
- Behavior of children in the neighborhood.

SOURCE: Marx, G. Lecture, Falls Church, VA. American Association of School Administrators, July 1993.

### III-4. Barriers to Parental Involvement

Factors that are barriers to parent involvement.

- School practices that do not accommodate the diversity of the families they serve.
  - Parent involvement events and opportunities are scheduled at times that do not allow for participation by working parents.
  - Communications to parents are written in languages that may not be appropriate for all families.
  - Schools do not provide parents with information or materials that they can use at home to support their children's learning.
  - School staff hold conscious or unconscious attitudes that imply that under-involved families do not participate because they do not care about education and have little to add to the school when they do participate.

- Time and childcare constraints.
  - Working parent families often have difficulty attending school events that are held during the workday.
  - Parents may have childcare responsibilities that prevent them from participating in programs held at the school.

- Negative experiences with schooling.
  - Parents whose own school experiences were unsuccessful and stressful may feel uncomfortable with any interaction with their children's school.
  - Young parents who may not have finished school may feel uncomfortable about reentering the school setting.

- Lack of support for cultural diversity
  - Parents with non-majority cultural and linguistic backgrounds may be initially uncomfortable in school settings that do not explicitly value the diversity they bring.
  - Linguistic minority parents who receive only English communications from the school may feel the school does not respect or value their heritage.
  - Parents who have experienced a history of discrimination may feel powerless and alienated from many public institutions.

- Primacy of basic survival needs
  - Some families are under extreme pressure from economic stress; the need to address their own food, clothing, and shelter needs takes precedence over involvement in their children's schooling.

SOURCE: Office of Community Education. *Focus on Parents. Strategies for Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families in Education.* Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1990.

### III-5. Practices and Conditions that Contribute to the Non-Involvement of Families

Practices and conditions that contributed to the non-involvement of some families can usually be grouped into two categories: school-based and non-school-based.

School-based practices:

- *Communications*: Does the school, in its written materials for families, use languages and vocabulary that are easily understood by all parents?
- *Scheduling of events for parents*: Is there variety and flexibility in the days, times, and locations of events, so that all parents will have an opportunity to attend at least some events?
- *Resources and responsibilities*: Does anyone in the school have the designated responsibility for reaching out to and making contact with all families? Are there resources behind this commitment? Has the school considered providing childcare or transportation or even offering parents who attend school events reimbursement for these expenses?
- *Attitudes and assumptions*: Is there a wide-spread recognition that teachers and parents are partners with different but parallel roles to play in the education of children? Are the experiences of linguistic and cultural minority parents recognized as rich resources that can enhance the curriculum of the school?

Non-school-based practices:

- Are area local employers asked to release family members so they can attend parent-teacher conferences?
- What agencies do families use in our community?
- How could we collaborate with these agencies to share information on the schools?

- Would these organizations be willing to host meetings between parents and representatives of the school?
- Are there churches, cultural organizations, health centers, and other institutions that have an interest in families in our schools?
- Are there ways in which we can collaborate with these community resources to address the training and information needs of parents?
- Are there ESL and job training classes in the community that may be willing to integrate information on schools into their curriculum?

SOURCE: Freedman, S.; Aschheim, B.; and Zerchykov, Ross. *Strategies for Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families in Education.* Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1989.

### III-6. Barriers Faced by Poor and Hard-to-Reach Parents

- Children from families that don't conform to middle class norms are often seen by school officials as having trouble in school.
- Communication between schools and poor families is mostly negative. Most of these parents are contacted only when their child is in trouble.
- Teachers and administrators appear to think of these families as deficient and concentrate on problems rather than the strengths of families.
- School staff believe that the problem of parents being hard to reach is the fault of the parents, not the schools.
- Many poor families have a low assessment of themselves in their abilities to be involved in their children's schooling.
- Most parents from all groups studied expressed a strong desire to be involved in their children's schooling.

SOURCE: National School Public Relations Association. *Helping Parents Help Their Kids.* Arlington, VA.: NSPRA, n.d.

## III-7. Gain or Loss of Confidence in Schools as Expressed by Citizens

The following are results of a Phi Delta Kappa study conducted to determine what factors most influenced citizens' gain or loss of confidence in the local school.

| Rank as Source of Gain | Source of Confidence | Rank as Source of Loss |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Teacher attitudes | 1 |
| 2 | Administrator attitudes | 3 |
| 3 | Student attitudes | 6 |
| 4 | Academic programs | 9 |
| 5 | Communications | 7 |
| 6 | Community attitudes | 5 |
| 7 | Academic performance | 10 |
| 8 | Instructional quality | 11 |
| 9 | Community involvement | 16 |
| 10 | Staff quality | 8 |
| 11.5 | Non-academic programs | 15 |
| 11.5 | Decision-making process | 2 |
| 13 | Discipline | 4 |
| 14 | Career/college readiness | 14 |
| 15.5 | Buildings/facilities | 13 |
| 15.5 | Funding | 12 |
| 17 | Materials/equipment | 17 |

SOURCE: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation. *Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School.* Bloomington, IN, 1988.

## III-8. Impression about Schools among Community Leaders*

The following are results of a study conducted by Phi Delta Kappa to determine what factors most influenced community leaders' impression of schools.

| | Source of Impression | | Most Influential Impression | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | School Level | District Wide | School Level | District Wide |
| School employees | 80% | 82% | 51% | 44% |
| School children | 74 | 75 | 22 | 21 |
| Children's parents | 73 | 81 | 13 | 8 |
| PTA | 30 | 28 | 2 | 5 |
| Media | 23 | 51 | 1 | 7 |
| School board | 23 | 51 | 1 | 5 |

*Respondents could check more than one response.

SOURCE: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation. *Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School.* Bloomington, IN, 1988.

## III-9. Who Was Responsible for Actions That Built Confidence?*

The following are results of a study conducted by Phi Delta Kappa to determine what individuals' action most built confidence in schools.

| Person Responsible | School Level | District Wide |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers | 65% | 45% |
| Principal | 63 | 39 |
| Non-classroom certified person | 42 | 34 |
| Non-certified school person | 30 | 9 |
| School community (general) | 22 | 24 |
| School board | 15 | 31 |
| Students | 15 | 7 |
| Superintendent | 15 | 48 |
| Other central office staff | 11 | 27 |

*Respondents could check more than one response.

SOURCE: *Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School*, Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation, 1988.

## III-10. Community Leaders' Sources of Confidence at the School-building Level*

The following are results of a Phi Delta Kappa study to determine what sources were most responsible for community leaders' confidence in a school.

| Rank | Sources of Confidence | No. of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| 1.5 | Dedicated, committed teachers | 75 |
| 1.5 | Special instructional and extracurricular programs | 75 |
| 3.5 | Effective administrators | 61 |
| 5 | Student-centered "caring" atmosphere | 51 |
| 6 | Positive attitudes of students/staff | 40 |
| 7 | Student discipline | 38 |
| 8 | Good curriculum | 36 |
| 9 | Student achievement | 30 |
| 10 | Parent participation | 28 |
| 11 | Communication with parents | 22 |
| 12 | Public image | 22 |
| 13.5 | High standards, goals, expectations | 15 |
| 13.5 | Board/superintendent relations, policies, decisions | 15 |
| 15 | Administrator/staff community service | 13 |
| 16 | Courteous office staff | 12 |
| 17 | Linkages with other institutions | 11 |
| 18 | Success of graduates | 10 |

*Respondents could check more than one response.

SOURCE: Phi Delta Kappa Foundation. *Handbook for Developing Public Confidence in School*, Bloomington, IN, 1988.

**Suggested Group Activity**

Given the overwhelming evidence that families have a powerful influence on student achievement, suggest some policies and programs that schools should adopt to strengthen and encourage the family role in enhancing student academic achievement.

# IV - WHAT THE RESEARCH IS SAYING

The U. S. Department of Education's research publication, *Strong Families, Strong Schools*, points out that, in our "rapidly changing society, few areas are as essential to a successful future as education, both as a means of learning basic and advanced skills and as a process for helping to develop responsible, compassionate citizens who are ready to make valuable contributions to their family, community, state, and nation"(1994). It is important for all children to receive an education that will help them achieve in today's competitive international economy.

More than three decades of research have shown that parental participation improves students' learning; and, more than a decade ago, the report "A Nation at Risk" focused public attention on the vital role families play as a child's first teacher. Yet, only in the past five or six years has this research been receiving the attention it merits and the findings used to design effective programs for parent and community involvement.

As Henderson(1994) points out in the latest report in the *Evidence* series, *The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, the term "family" is used rather than "parents" for an important reason. In many communities children are raised by adults who are not their parents, or by older siblings. For many children, these care givers provide an extended support system and function effectively as their family.

## TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

### IV-1. The *Evidence* Series Documenting the Importance of Families in Improving Student Achievement.

1981 *Evidence Grows* reported 35 studies that documented significant, measurable benefits for children, families, and schools! The conclusion was that the form of parent involvement does not seem to be critical, so long as it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive and long-lasting.

1987 *The Evidence Continues to Grow* reported 15 new studies, in addition to the ones covered in the first edition. It also pointed out the growth in this special topic of research in new areas, such as the study of parenting styles, high-achieving students from low-income families, the relationships between families and public versus parochial schools, and successful practices of parent involvement.

1994 *The Family is Critical to Student Achievement* covered 66 studies, reviews, reports, analyses, and books, 39 of which were new. Of the 29 studies on how family background and behaviors influence student achievement, only 5 were included in the 1987 edition. Also included were new areas of study on school or community-based programs and interventions.

SOURCE: Henderson, A. T., and Berla, N., eds. *The Family is Critical to Student Achievement: A New Generation of Evidence*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994.

## IV-2. The Relationship of Parent Training and the At-Risk Students' Achievement, Attendance, and Attitudes

A 1993 study examined the relationship between parent training, designed to help parents with basic parenting skills and teach them how to get involved in the education of their children, and the achievement, attendance, and attitudes of at-risk students. Using a pre/post design with a treatment and control group, the study determined that:

- Students whose parents attended the workshops had an increase in grade point average, while students whose parents did not attend the workshops experienced a decrease in grade point average.
- Using school attendance records from report cards, no effect on attendance was found.
- Using a survey to measure student attitudes toward school, parent attendance at the workshops apparently did not effect these attitudes.
- Students whose parents participated in the workshops reported a significantly greater degree of parental involvement in the educational process and school than did students whose parents did not participate.

SOURCE: McDaniel, L. "Parent Involvement Training and the Achievement, Attendance, and Attitudes of At-Risk Students," *Community Education Research Digest*, 7(2), Spring 1993.

## IV-3. Parent Practices That Increase Children's Reading Achievement

A 1985 review of 30 studies that identified parent practices that increased children's reading achievement concluded:

- Children who had parents who read to them 8-10 minutes a day had more positive attitudes and higher reading levels than children whose parents did not read to them.
- Children who asked questions and talked about the story had higher performance scores than children who did not.
- Children whose parents initiated talk about the story had significantly higher reading achievement scores than children whose parents did not.

SOURCE: Silvern, S. "Parent Involvement and Reading Achievement: A Review of Research and Implications for Practice," *Childhood Education*, 61(1), September-October, 1985.

## IV-4. The Relationship between Parents' Sense of Competence and Parent Involvement

In an exploratory study that examined the relationship between parents' sense of competency and parent involvement, a total of 390 parents of children in kindergarten through fourth grade completed a questionnaire assessing parent efficacy and involvement in five types of activities: help with homework, educational activities, classroom volunteering, conference participation, and telephone calls with teachers. Teachers (n = 50) also responded to a questionnaire assessing teacher efficacy, their perceptions of parent efficacy and their estimates of parent involvement.

Results related to parents include:

- Correlations between parents' sense of competency and more hours of classroom volunteering, more hours spent in educational activities with children and fewer telephone calls with the teacher were significant.
- Parent efficacy scores were not significantly related to gender, marital status, employment status, or family income.
- Parent education level was linked to some variations in efficacy scores. Parents with a grade school education had significantly lower scores than did parents with all levels of college education; parents with a high school education were significantly lower than parents with some college work beyond the bachelor's degree.
- More hours of classroom volunteering were reported by females, married parents, and unemployed parents.
- More hours of homework help were reported by parents with lower education, lower family income, and single parents.
- More phone calls were reported by the lowest income parents.

Results related to teachers include:

- Teacher efficacy and teacher perceptions of parents' efficacy were both linked positively to teacher reports of parent involvement in homework, educational activities, volunteering, and conference participation.
- Teacher efficacy was positively linked to teacher perceptions of parent efficacy.

SOURCE: Hoover-Dempsey, K.; Bassler, O.; and Brissie, J. "Explorations in Parent-School Relations," *Journal of Educational Research*, 8(5), May-June, 1992.

## IV-5. Benefits of Strong Home-School Partnerships

The benefits that result when a strong home-school partnership is developed are not only to students, but to parents, teachers and administrators.

*Teachers* benefit through:

- School training about how to work effectively with families from diverse backgrounds.
- Support from the principal for their efforts to work with families.
- Tapping the knowledge, skills, and resources of colleagues.
- Maximizing limited resources and time through the cooperative development of grade level homework and home learning activities.
- Better understanding of parent expectations and closer communication with parents.
- Increased rate of return on homework and greater family involvement in home learning activities.
- Increased parental support and cooperation.

*Administrators* benefit through:

- Better communications between school and home.
- Fewer parent complaints about inconsistent and inappropriate homework.
- Better use of limited resources to address the critical need of linking home and school.
- Improved school climate where children see parents and teachers as partners.

*Parents* benefit through:

- Opportunities to become partners with teachers and to shape important decisions that enhance their children's chances for success in school.
- Consistent expectations, practices, and messages about homework and home learning activities.
- Increased opportunities to engage in home learning activities with their children.
- Access to schoolwide resources such as parent learning centers, homework hotlines, homework centers, parent workshops, and home visits.

*Students* benefit through:

- More positive attitudes toward school.
- Higher achievement in reading.
- Higher quality and more grade appropriate homework.
- Completion of more homework on weekends.
- Observing more similarity between family and school.

SOURCE: Moles, O. C. and D'Angelo, D. *Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, OERI. September, 1993.

## IV-6. Other Conclusions about Parent Involvement

Research confirms that:

- Schools can, through *policies* and *actions,* reach out to parents to help them be involved in the education of their children.
- Involving parents in the education of their children has a *positive* effect on *student achievement.*
- Parent involvement is most beneficial when it is *well-planned, systematic, long lasting,* and when parents play many roles.
- While all forms of parent involvement are desirable, *home-based parent involvement* (doing home-learning activities coordinated with children's classwork and providing enrichment activities) appears to be the most valuable in regard to student achievement
- Parents whose involvement is actively sought by teachers have more *positive* attitudes about their children's schools and teachers.
- *Teacher initiative* and *willingness to reach out* to parents are key factors for effective parent involvement.
- Parent involvement is an *underutilized* resource for the enhancement of student achievement.
- Socioeconomic status and lack of education have *no effect* on the willingness of parents to help their own children.

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J.; Fernandez, B.; and Preston, J. *Home and School Partners in Student Success, A Handbook for Principals and Staff.* San Diego, CA: San Diego City Schools, Community Relations and Integration Services Division.1991.

## IV-7. Family Interaction and Behavior Associated with High- and Low-Achieving Students

One group of studies related to parent involvement has looked at the type of family interactions and behavior associated with high-achieving students as compared to low-achieving students. Characteristics of families whose children do well in school include:

- Establishing a daily family routine—providing time and a quiet place to study, assigning responsibility for household chores, being firm about times to get up and go to bed, having dinner together.
- Monitoring out-of-school activities—setting limits on TV watching, checking up on children when parents are not home, arranging for after-school activities and supervised care.
- Modeling the value of learning, self-discipline, and hard word—communicating through questioning and conversation, demonstrating that achievement comes from working hard, using reference materials, and the library.
- Expressing high but realistic expectations for achievement—setting goals and standards that are appropriate for children's age and maturity, recognizing and encouraging special talents, informing friends and family about successes.
- Encouraging children's development and progress in school—maintaining a warm and supportive home, showing interest in children's progress at school, helping with homework, discussing the value of a good education and possible career options, staying in touch with teachers and school staff.
- Reading, writing and discussions among family members—listening to children read, and talking about what is being read; discussing the day over dinner; telling stories and sharing problems; writing letters, lists, and messages.
- Using community resources for family needs—enrolling in sports programs or lessons, introducing children to role models and mentors, using community services.

SOURCE: Henderson, A. T.; and Berla, N. *The Family is Critical to Student Achievement: A New Generation of Evidence*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994.

## IV-8. Parent and Teacher Perceptions about Parental Involvement in Schooling

A recent study compared the perceptions of all teachers and parents of a K-5 school's involvement initiative as well as differences in parent attitudes by family structure, employment status, and educational level. The conclusions and implications were:

- Teachers have misconceptions about why parents do not take a more active role at the school. While teachers feel that parents have major obstacles in their personal lives that prohibit their participation at the school, parents say this is not true. If other responsibilities do not keep parents away, perhaps school practices do. Schools need to ask parents why they do not come to school and then change school practices that are barriers.
- By all methods, teachers report more home-school contacts than parents. Schools need to discover the reason for this discrepancy. Assessment instruments could track the

number of written and verbal communications and parents' responses. Once identified, weaknesses in the communication process could be corrected.

- Disagreement on current levels of involvement may mean that teachers and parents define involvement differently. If parents feel they are doing more to help their children than teachers perceive, they may be identifying different activities as involvement. Teachers need to ask parents to describe activities they engage in with their children. Existing activities could serve as a basis to create other activities at home and school.
- Differences in responses by family characteristics suggest that schools need to modify their views of changing families. Family structure and employment status yielded few differences in perceptions compared to many differences by parents' educational levels. Yet schools continue to make different demands of parents from non-traditional and working families. Schools need to re-evaluate the basis on which they ask parents to be more involved.
- Strong correlations between parents' involvement and satisfaction with the school suggest that parents who come to school are more knowledgeable about school practices. Parent understanding of school efforts to help children may bridge the gap between home and school by providing parents with strategies to help their children outside the classroom.
- The fact that teachers and parents generally agreed on the importance of activities to involve parents and the role of the school in helping families is encouraging. The common values that teachers and parents share may serve as the basis for more frequent, meaningful interaction.

SOURCE: Wanant, C. L. "Parent and Teacher Perceptions About Parental Involvement in Schooling," *Community Education Research Digest*, 8(2), Spring 1994.

## Suggested Group Activity

Your school is aware that the number of parents coming to school for any reason is very low. You have volunteered to serve on a task force to determine the reasons that parents do not come to school and to identify potential barriers to parental involvement. What would you expect to find? What outreach activities would you suggest to try to increase involvement?

# V - A FRAMEWORK FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Teachers have many different ways of working with parents and fostering parental and community involvement. Some of these ways are deeply ingrained, based on individual personalities and, often, on positive or negative past experiences. Others are based on assumptions that are not always reliable. The latter is often the case in a teacher's efforts to involve "hard-to-reach" parents.

If teachers based the definition of "hard-to-reach" parents on past experience and personal perceptions, many would include variables such as minority ethnic backgrounds, low socioeconomic status, urban environment, public housing resident, and uneducated. Unfortunately, if teachers were to solely refer to the literature and media, they might conclude that all low-income minority parents living in an urban public housing complex are not concerned and involved in their children's education. As Weinberg (1990) explained, "Too often, teachers assume that parents who do not actively demonstrate an interest in their child's education are apathetic and unconcerned. This is not true, however. Chances are these parents want very much to be a part of their child's education, but feel they cannot."

Similarly, Herndon (1995), president of the National Head Start Association, defends the image of Head Start families. He remarked "Let's continue to fight this mythological image of the welfare queens who don't want to work or take care of their children. The poor people in this country want a break. They want an opportunity." He continues that contrary to the image of Head Start families being poor and on welfare, the truth is that two-thirds of people on welfare are working and thirty-eight percent receive no cash assistance at all.

Teachers need to understand that there are many self-sufficient "hard-to-reach" parents who are also motivated and involved in their children's education. The dim and dreary picture that is usually painted of this population may not be so grim after all. There is the real possibility that these parents would not be so hard to reach if a more optimistic approach and attitude was emphasized in parent involvement efforts.

It is also the case that while most teachers say they are trying to involve parents, the reality is that some dread the prospect of more parental involvement and actually adopt a protective stance that does little to welcome parents. Although feelings of defensiveness may have some justification, the practice of keeping parents at a distance goes against all the documentation of what is good for student achievement and success in school. Further, it is important to have teachers also actively helping to build a community atmosphere that supports children's learning, especially when parents fail to supply sufficient time and emotional support for their children's academic success.

A series of Phi Delta Kappa studies (1988) document the influential role of teachers in building confidence in schools. One study to determine which factors most influenced citizens' gain or loss of confidence in a local school found that teacher attitudes ranked as the number one source of *gain* and *loss* of confidence in a school. In a companion study focused on what individual's actions most build confidence in schools,

- at the school level, teachers outranked all school-related personnel, including the principal (teachers 65%—principals 63%).
- at the district level, teachers were only outranked by the superintendent and then only by a small percentage (superintendent 48%—teachers 45%).

Another study focused on sources of community leaders' confidence in a school found that dedicated, committed teachers and special instructional and extracurricular programs ranked equally as the most important sources of confidence, followed by effective administrators.

The key to building effective teacher-parent-community relations is mutual respect. If teachers are to effectively involve parents and build a community atmosphere that supports learning, training programs will be needed. Unit V focuses on a variety of involvement models.

(Note: Herdon cited in *The Unrecognized Educational Exceptions: the Involved, "Hard-to-Reach" Parents*, White, R. 1995, manuscript in process.)

## TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

### V-1. Four Basic Parent Involvement Models

*Protective Model*

Goal is to reduce conflict between parents and educators, primarily through the separation of parents' and educators' functions, and to protect the school from interference by parents.

Assumptions:

- Parents delegate to the school the responsibility of educating their children.
- Parents hold school personnel accountable for results.
- Educators accept this delegation of responsibility.

Advantage:

- It is generally very effective at achieving its goals of protecting the school against parental intrusion in most circumstances.

Disadvantages:

- Exacerbates many conflicts between home and school by creating no structure or predictable opportunities for preventive problem solving.
- Ignores the potential of home-school collaboration for improving school achievement.
- Rejects rich resources for enrichment and school support available from families and other members of the community that could be available to the school.

*School-to-Home Transmission Model*

Goal is to enlist parents in supporting the objectives of the school.

Assumptions:

- Children's achievement is fostered by continuity of expectations and values between home and school.
- School personnel should identify the values and practices outside school that contribute to school success.

- Parents should endorse the importance of schooling, reinforce school expectations at home, provide conditions at home that nurture development and support school success, and ensure that the child meets minimum academic and social requirements.

Advantages:

- Programs based on this model have been useful in increasing children's school success.
- Parents seek clear direction for the school about the social and academic skills that are needed for children's success and their role in supporting the development of those skills.
- Clear transmission of information can be a welcome offering to parents, particularly when they have not had access to the social mainstream and seek such access for their children.

Disadvantages:

- Programs built on this model often contain components that reflect an unwillingness to consider parents as equal partners having important strengths.
- All parents may not be able to devote sufficient time and energy to parent involvement activities if such conditions as dangerous housing, poor health, or stringent employment requirements interfere.
- Schools may find it difficult to draw clear boundaries between the roles of school and home in formal education.
- There is the danger of demeaning the value and importance of the family's culture in the effort to transmit the values and goals of the school.
- Differences in class or educational background can make teachers and parents feel uncomfortable and threatened, and turf concerns need to be addressed and negotiated.

*Curriculum Enrichment Model*

Goal is to expand and extend the schools' curriculum by incorporating the contributions of families.

Assumptions:

- Continuity of learning between home and school is of critical importance in encouraging children's learning.
- The values and cultural histories of many children are omitted from the standard school curriculum, leading to a disruption of this continuity between home and school, and often to less motivation, status, and achievement of these children in school.
- This omission distorts the curriculum, leading to a less accurate and less comprehensive understanding of events and achievements and to a perpetuation of damaging beliefs and attitudes about immigrants and oppressed minorities.
- Parents and educators should work together to enrich curriculum objectives and content.
- Relationships between home and school are based on mutual respect, and both parents and teachers are seen as experts and resources in this process of discovery.

Advantages:

- Model offers an attractive approach for incorporating parent involvement into children's learning.
- Drawing on the knowledge and expertise of parents increases the resources available to the school and provides rich opportunities for adults to learn from each other.
- The contributions of immigrant or oppressed minorities who have not traditionally participated in schools are especially welcomed.

Disadvantages:

- Creating continuity between home and school demands a significant investment of parents' and educators' time, resources, support, and study.
- The number of different cultures represented in particular classrooms may make curricular adaptation very complex.
- Debate still rages in this country about what the schools mission should be in educating children with diverse backgrounds—Is there a majority culture and should it be taught to all, or should the diversity of our children be reflected and valued in the curriculum?
- Differences in class or educational background can make teachers and parents feel uncomfortable and threatened, and turf concerns need to be addressed and negotiated.

*Partnership Model*

Goal is for parents and educators to work together to accomplish a common mission, generally, for all children in school to achieve success.

Assumptions:

- Accomplishing the joint mission requires a re-visioning of the school environment and a need to discover new policies and practices, structures, roles, relationships, and attitudes in order to realize the vision.
- Accomplishing the joint mission demands collaboration among parents, community representatives, and educators. Because the task is very challenging and requires many resources, none of these groups acting alone can accomplish it.

Advantage:

- A true partnership is a transforming vision of school culture based on collegiality, experimentation for school improvement, mutual support, and joint problem solving.

Disadvantages:

- It is difficult to implement.
- It requires exchanging the traditional isolation of the educator's role for a collaborative role, and the development of new patterns of scheduling and interaction to support this role.
- It requires a leader who is also a facilitator and cheerleader, as well as school and district policies that support the effort.

SOURCE: Swap, S. M. *Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1993.

## V-2. Basic Roles of Parents in Their Children's Education

- *Parents as partners*

  Parents move from the role of prime educator to a situation where this role is shared with the schools. Much of the parent role at this stage relates to their legal responsibility to enroll their child in school. Parents register their child and ensure that he or she is properly dressed, gets to school on time, and attends each day. They purchase necessary supplies and equipment, and obtain the required vaccinations and medical exams. Other parent responsibilities focus on various types of home/school communications. In addition, parents have certain rights including access to school records, due process as related to discipline, and involvement in decisions about special education placement.

- *Collaborators and problem solvers*

  Parents can encourage and reward satisfactory achievement, show interest in the child's school day, and enforce policies about bedtime, television and completing homework. Another critical aspect of this role is how parents can provide enrichment activities which reinforce school learning. These can include reading to their child, trips to the library or a local museum, and a whole variety of other at-home or in-the-community activities. Parents are also important when their child is having difficulties at school. The solution to such problems is rarely easy and it may take considerable negotiations between home and school before being resolved.

- *Parents as audience*

  Parents become part of the audience at the many activities and events designed to draw them into the school. These include open houses, back-to-school nights, athletic events, concerts, and plays. A major purpose of such events is to provide parents with information about the school on a more direct, personal level and children usually feel good when they see their parents in the audience.

- *Parents as supporters*

  Parents serving as school volunteers in a wide variety of capacities serves as the central focus for this role. As volunteers, parents can help in their own child's or other classrooms, work in the school library, tutor special needs children, make attendance calls, or share their expertise in enrichment programs. Parent-teacher organizations provide other opportunities for parents to become involved as do parent education programs and parent support networks.

- *Parents as advisors and co-decision makers*

  This role is most often accomplished through some type of parent advisory group that helps work out solutions to various problems and issues facing the school. Other possibilities, which move toward real power-sharing, include parents elected to school governing boards and councils developed as part of site-based management efforts.

SOURCE: Henderson, A.; Marburger, C.; and Ooms, T. *Beyond the Bake Sale*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986.

## V-3. Epstein's Types of Parent Involvement and the Role of Schools

*Type 1. Basic Obligation of Families*

Schools help all families establish home environments to support learning.

Examples:

- Schools provide suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Schools provide workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing issues at each grade level.
- Schools provide families with information about adolescent health and safety, supervision, nutrition, discipline, and parenting approaches.

*Type 2. Basic Obligations of Schools*

Schools design effective forms of communication to each parent.

Examples:

- Schools provide communications that enable families to help students select curricula and choose among special options.
- Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-up as needed.
- Schools provide information to help with the transition from elementary to middle level and from middle level to high school, and to help students plan for college and jobs.
- Translators are provided for language-minority families.
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work are sent home for review and parent comments and then returned.

*Type 3. Involvement at School*

Schools recruit and organize parent help and support.

Examples:

- School volunteer program, class parents, or committee of volunteers is established for each room.
- Schools provide parent room or parent club for volunteers and resources for parents.
- Annual postcard survey is mailed to identify all available talents, times and locations of volunteers.

*Type 4. Involvement in Home Learning*

Schools give parents ideas on how to help their children at home.

Examples:

- Information is provided to parents on requirements in each subject at each grade level.
- Regular homework schedules are established that require students to discuss schoolwork at home.
- Calendars are provided with daily topics for discussion by parents and students.

- Homework hotlines are provided and videotapes are made of classes for absentees.

*Type 5. Involvement in Decision-making, Governance and Advocacy*

Schools recruit and train parent leaders.

Examples:

- Participation and leadership opportunities in PTA/PTO or other parent organizations are provided, including membership on advisory councils or committees.
- Independent advocacy groups are established.

*Type 6. Collaboration with Community Organizations*

Schools, families, and students must establish connections with agencies, businesses, cultural groups, and community organizations.

Examples:

- Schools coordinate student access to community and support services.
- Schools draw on community resources to provide parent education in adolescent development.

SOURCE: Epstein, J. "School and Family Partnerships." *Encyclopedia of Educational Research.* New York, NY: McMillan, 1992.

## V-4. Rich's MegaSkills

*MegaSkills* is the framework for parent involvement advocated by the Home School Institute. Creator Dorothy Rich explains *MegaSkills* as those skills critical for all learning and considers them as long-lasting, achievement-enhancing skills that make possible the use of the other skills that we learn. According to Rich, *MegaSkills* are what the family can teach a child prior to attending school and can continue to reinforce once school has started. The ten skills are:

- *Confidence*: feeling able to do it
- *Motivation*: wanting to do it
- *Effort*: being willing to work hard
- *Responsibility*: doing what's right
- *Initiative*: moving into action
- *Perseverance*: completing what you start
- *Caring*: showing concern for others
- *Teamwork*: working with others
- *Common Sense*: using good judgment
- *Problem Solving*: putting what you know and what you can do into action

These *MegaSkills* are the basis for different training programs: MegaSkills Leader Training for Parent Involvement; MegaSkills Essentials for the Classroom; The New MegaSkills Bond; and bringing them all together, The MegaSkills School.

SOURCE: Rich, D. *MegaSkills — How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1988.

## V-5. Chrispeel's Typology of Home-School Partnership Roles

The Home-School Partnerships Roles are a continuum that builds upward from a foundation of home and school as co-communicators to the more formal partnership role of home and school as co-advocates, advisors, and decision-makers.

- *Home and School as Co-Communicators*
  This role provides the foundation for any partnership efforts. Communications must be two-way and involve all families and school personnel.

- *Home and School as Co-Supporters*
  This role has three critical dimensions. The first is parents meeting the basic obligations of child-rearing. The second dimension is the family supporting the school through activities such as fund raising, volunteering, etc. Schools supporting families is the third dimension.

- *Home and School as Co-Learners and Co-Teachers*
  The role of co-learners implies that both parents and school staff have opportunities to learn in formal and informal ways. Acknowledging home and school as co-teachers recognizes that children not only learn from classroom teachers, but that parents also play a critical role in helping children with learning activities at home.

- *Home and School as Co-Advocates, Advisors, and Decision-Makers*
  This role not only includes parents and teachers as advocates, but includes more formal ways of involving them through school advisory or decision-making committees.

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J. *Using an Effective Schools Framework to Build Home-School Partnerships for Student Success.* Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development, 1992.

## Suggested Group Activity

Imagine that your school has never had a parent involvement program and has a long history of non-involvement of parents. Assume that the school has a new principal who feels very strongly about the importance of parent and community involvement. The principal has appointed you to a task force to develop a plan designed to (a) increase teachers' knowledge of their importance in building and sustaining confidence in schools, and (b) gain their commitment to and active participation in creating a broad-based parent involvement program. What would be recommended?

## VI - PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING HOME-SCHOOL BARRIERS

What makes a "good" parent involvement program? Why do some schools seem warm and welcoming, while parents feel threatened or unappreciated in others? Successful parent involvement programs have three common characteristics, according to a guide published by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (1990). Specifically, effective programs are:

1. *A schoolwide priority.*
   Programs are given adequate support, which includes written school and district policies establishing parent involvement as a legitimate and desired activity. Adequate funding ensures the programs consistency over time. The principal and other administrators provide leadership and encouragement. Staff are allocated time to coordinate activities. Space and equipment are provided, as well as food, transportation, and childcare as needed for parent meetings.
2. *A community-based effort.*
   School personnel work in partnership with parents and other community members so that all players have a strong sense of ownership. Types of involvement and activities are planned jointly. Nothing is imposed unilaterally by the school or the community. School personnel have a good understanding of the community's history, leadership, role models, and appropriate communication channels. Activities address issues of concern to the community.
3. *Characterized by well-defined but flexible roles and responsibilities.*
   Training is provided to both staff and parents to help them understand these roles and responsibilities and to learn ways to collaborate more effectively. Mechanisms are in place to facilitate open, two-way communication among the various key players. Administrators, teachers, outreach workers, parents, other community members, and children—each group has some knowledge of the values and expectations of the other groups and of appropriate ways to communicate across groups. Players accept and respect diverse viewpoints. Personal outreach to all parents is intensive and ongoing. Specially trained staff use a variety of media and activities to engage families and other community members in a wide variety of culturally appropriate involvement opportunities. All players continuously evaluate and revise activities.

### TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

## VI-1. Basic Principles of Successful Parent Involvement Programs

Basic principles characteristic of successful parent involvement programs fall into two categories:(1) those related to perspectives about parents; and (2) those related to implementation.

*Related to perspectives about parents*

- Parents already make important contributions. Successful programs emphasize the strengths of parents and let them know that these strengths are valued.
- Parents can make additional contributions. Successful programs help parents to identify what new things parents are capable of doing.
- Parents can learn new parenting techniques. This perspective does not imply a criticism of existing parental practices. Rather, it suggests that parents have both the ability and interest to expand their parenting strategies and techniques.
- Parents have important perspectives on their children. Successful programs recognize that the perspectives parents have on their children are important and useful to teachers.
- Parent-child relationships are different from teacher-child relationships. Successful programs recognize and utilize these differences in relationships. The activities suggested for parents to undertake with their children at home make use of family situations in reaching goals. Teachers can consult with parents in selecting and developing activities for use at home.
- Parents' perspectives about involvement are important. In successful parent involvement programs, the process, efforts, and activities are viewed from the perspective of the parents rather than from those of the staff.
- Most parents really care about their children. Successful parent involvement programs hold and express a sincere belief that most parents really care about their children.
- Parents have many reasons for their involvement. Successful programs extend additional efforts to make it clear what the purposes are for parent participation and how parents might work best with their child.

*Related to implementation*

- Goals, purposes, and activities are matched.
- Staff skills and available resources are considered. Successful programs look at the staff's development and choose to do what is reasonable and productive rather than trying to do it all.
- Variations in parents' skills are recognized. Successful programs reflect the realization that there are many ways for parents to be involved and that all parents do not need to be involved in the same ways.
- Program activities are flexible and creative. They are designed to be appropriate for and responsive to the particular needs of the parents.
- Expectations, roles, and responsibilities are communicated. Successful parent involvement programs have clear task expectations, roles, and responsibilities, all of which are communicated to parents.

- Parents are involved in decision making, and administrative decisions are explained. There is a strong emphasis on the communication of information.
- Problems are expected but solutions are emphasized. Policies and procedures for dealing with problems are developed and communicated to parents. Programs focus on finding solutions to problems, rather than on the fact that they have problems.
- Optimum versus maximum involvement is sought. Successful parent involvement programs are programs in which there is optimum rather than maximum involvement so that all those involved enjoy rather than resent their involvement.

SOURCE: Becher, R. *Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1984. ED 247 032

## VI-2. Fundamentals for Building a Family-School Relationship

Because schools are different, there is no one set of practices or characteristics, to which we can point and say, 'Aha! That is the definitive partnership school.' However, there are some fundamental principles to which schools must subscribe or their attempts at parent involvement will fall short. These are:

- Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly.
- Communications with parents are frequent, clear, and two-way.
- Parents are treated as collaborators in the educational process, with a strong complementary role to play in their children's school learning and behavior.
- Parents are encouraged, both formally and informally, to comment on school policies and (on some issues) to share in the decision making.
- The school recognizes its responsibility to forge a partnership with all families in the school, not simply those most easily available. This includes parents who work outside the home, divorced parents without custody, and families of minority race and language.
- The principal and other school administrators actively express and promote the philosophy of partnership with all families.
- The school encourages volunteer participation from parents and the community at large.

SOURCE: Henderson, A.; Marburger, C.; and Ooms, T. "Building a Family-School Relationship. *Principal.* January, 1987.

## VI-3. Strategies to Reduce Home-School Barriers

Strategies to reduce home-school barriers can be categorized into three broad areas: expand opportunities for interaction; increase collaboration, knowledge, and skills; and reduce psychological and cultural barriers. Under each are a series of actions that might be taken.

*Expand Opportunities for Interaction*

- Accommodate the changing nature of American families by providing transportation.
- Holding evening/weekend meetings, etc.
- Establish a parent-liaison or community-school coordinator position.

- Capitalize on parent interest in helping students at home by establishing special programs such as Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork and Parents in Touch.
- Sponsor See-For-Yourself Tours and Patron Tours and invite all residents, including businesses, for a bus tour.
- Sponsor a Parent University and set up a one-day format for parents to receive information about various educational matters and topics such as Parents as First Teachers, Coping with Teens, etc.
- Establish a program where students regularly perform for their parents and the community.
- Have the school serve as a community center for a wide variety of meetings, activities, adult classes, and recreational opportunities that serve citizens of all ages.
- Work with PTA/PTO and other booster groups to establish opportunities to meet the principal and teachers in neighborhood homes.

*Increase Collaboration, Knowledge, and Skills*

- Establish comprehensive programs through interagency collaboration and full-service schools initiatives.
- Provide parent education and special training, such as Math Matters and Family Math.
- Provide special programs in family literacy and job training.

*Reduce Psychological and Cultural Barriers*

- Bring new information to parents and educators in non-threatening settings via seminars, informal learning sessions, home visits.
- Implement targeted approaches and programs that combine English as a Second Language (ESL) and increase parental understanding of home-school collaboration.

SOURCE: Chavkin, N.F. ed. *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.

### VI-4. Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families

New approaches and a strong commitment are needed in order to successfully involve underrepresented families. These approaches need to be guided by several principles:

- All families are invested in their children's future; some find it difficult to act on their interest through involvement in the school's traditional activities.
- There are diverse ways in which parents can become involved in their children's education.
- It is important to reach out to parents. If some parents are not going into the school, the school may need to go to where the parents are and provide them with incentives and the support to become involved.
- Schools must be willing to experiment with new approaches to home-school interaction; schools must be willing to restructure in ways that address families' needs for flexible time frames, childcare, and transportation. Schools may need to adopt an expanded definition of their mission and collaborate with other community service providers in providing educational services to parents whose life circumstances prevent them from being as involved as they may want to be in their children's schooling.

- Effective outreach requires a partnership between schools and other community organizations in order to address the diverse educational needs of parents and children.
- Schools that engage in successful outreach to under-involved parents will benefit from the rich cultural heritages and ethnic diversity that these underrepresented families will bring to the school.

SOURCE: Freedman, S.; Aschheim, B.; and Zerchykov, R. *Strategies for Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families in Education.* Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1989.

### VI-5. Teacher Norms, Values, and Beliefs Impact Parent Involvement Efforts

To build teachers' capacity for parent involvement, the norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that are currently facilitating or hindering home-school collaboration need to be examined.

**ASSUMPTIONS**

| Hindering Collaboration | Facilitating Collaboration |
|---|---|
| Parents who don't attend school events don't care about their child's school success. | Not all parents can come or feel comfortable coming to school; that doesn't mean they don't care. |
| Parents who are illiterate, non-English speaking or unemployed can't help their children. | All families have strengths and skills they can contribute to their child's school success. |
| Parent activists take time away from essential duties of the principal/teacher. | Parent activists are important community leaders who can help the school improve. |
| Parents from different ethnic and racial groups don't understand how to help their children. | Parents from different ethnic and racial groups have alternative and important ways of supporting their children. |
| It is up to parents to find out what is going on at school. | Schools have a responsibility to reach out to parents. |
| Parent involvement is not worth the effort. | Parent involvement is an effort that pays off in improved student achievement, improved school effectiveness, and increased parent and community support for education. |

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J; Fernandez, B.; and Preston, J. *Home and School Partners in Student Success, A Handbook for Principals and Staff.* San Diego, CA: San Diego City Schools, 1991.

## VI-6. Keys to Involving Parents of At-Risk Students

Parents of at-risk students are usually not very involved with the schools and they are often the hardest to reach. Several keys to involving parents of at-risk students include:

- *Committed, dedicated leadership.* Overcoming barriers to reaching at-risk parents does not require large amounts of money, but it does take energy, patience, and persistence.
- *Innovative, flexible approaches.* "The way we've always done it" clearly doesn't work. What is needed is a willingness to try something new.
- *Attention to environment, format, and scheduling.* When, where, and how a meeting or event is held is important to the goal of making parents feel welcome.
- *Strong, personal outreach.* Schools need to reach out to parents and the community, rather than expecting parents to take the lead.
- *Essentials of Childcare, transportation, and meals.* For low-income parents, the absence of these basics may make their participation impossible.

SOURCE: Liontos, L. B. *At Risk Families and School: Becoming Partners.* Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse of Education Management, 1993.

## Suggested Group Activity

Because your school serves a low socioeconomic population, past administrators have felt that it would be impossible to get parents involved. Assume that you are a member of the task force the new principal has created charged with devising a plan for increasing parent involvement, especially families of at-risk students. What is the first step you think the task force should recommend to the principal? Why?

# VII - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Researchers Anne Henderson, Carl Marburger, and Theodora Ooms (1986) state that because schools differ from one another, there is no blueprint for parent involvement. But all schools that work well with families share a fundamental set of principles. If the principal, school staff, and parents do not subscribe to most of these principles, their attempts to increase family involvement will fall short.

In a school with an effective parent involvement program the principal and other school administrators actively express and promote the philosophy of partnership with all families and the community at large. Every aspect of the school climate is open, helpful, and friendly, and community action with parents is frequent, clear, and two-way. Teachers recognize their responsibility to forge a partnership with all families in the school, not simply with those most easily available. This includes working parents, divorced parents without custody of their children, minority families, and families who do not speak English. Parents are treated as collaborators in the education process and are encouraged, both formally and informally, to comment on school policies and, on some issues, to share in the decision making.

In *Strategies for Increasing the Involvement of Underrepresented Families in Education*, Freedman, Ascheim, and Zerchykov (1989) suggest that schools may have to make extra ordinary efforts in order to involve these families. Schools must be willing to experiment with new approaches to home-school interaction; and if some parents are not coming to school, the school may need to go to where the parents are and provide them with incentives and the support to become involved.

## TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

### VII-1. Factors Complicating Parent Involvement Efforts

In an ideal world, teachers and parents would work closely in the education of children. However, in reality, there are several factors that complicate the situation.

- The interests of parents and schools sometimes diverge, requiring teachers to make difficult judgments about how best to fulfill their joint obligations to students and to parents.
- Students vary in the degree and kind of support they receive at home for their school work. The effects of culture, language, and parental education, income, and aspirations influence each learner. Teachers are alert to these effects and tailor their practice accordingly to enhance student achievement. However, when faced with conflict, the teacher must hold the interest of the student and the purpose of schooling paramount.
- The behavior and mind-set of schools and families can be adversarial. Some parents are distrustful of the school's values and schools sometimes underestimate a family's

potential to contribute to children's intellectual growth. Students get caught in the middle, their allegiance to and affection for each part challenged by the other.

SOURCE: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. *Toward High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession*. Washington, DC, 1990.

### VII-2. Basic Steps in Developing an Effective Family Involvement Program

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms suggest that there are eight basic steps for effective family involvement programs:

- Provide at least half-time coordination for activities.
- Assess together your needs and resources.
- Develop a common understanding about the roles parents and staff will play.
- Recruit parents actively; select and assign them carefully.
- Provide training for parents and staff.
- Establish several communication channels and keep them open.
- Provide continuing support services for parent activities.
- Allow frequent opportunities for evaluation and feedback.

SOURCE: Henderson, A.; Marburger, C.; and Ooms, T. Next Steps in Strengthening the Partnership. In *Beyond the Bake Sale. An Educator's Guide for Working with Parents*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986.

### VII-3. Case Studies Show Similar Development and Implementation Steps

Case studies of parent involvement programs in four distinctly different Tennessee communities showed "surprisingly similar steps in development and implementation."

- A needs assessment was conducted and problems were defined.
- Funding was obtained.
- A coordinator was hired who reviewed the problems identified and immediately began to reach out to anyone who could help. Thus, the program developed from the bottom up, not the top down.
- The coordinator began to implement the strategy named in the funding proposal, but was flexible and able to reevaluate problems and progress and find new strategies as needed.
- The coordinator identified and used personal motivators/rewards to involve parents (door prizes, field trips, social services, etc.).
- The coordinator built good interpersonal relationships with parents, school people and other community members, which led to developing a reputation of trustworthiness.
- Project decision-making was a group process in which parents were given ownership as much as possible. Project practices were changed as needed, adapting to fit the population being served.
- This process led to a sense of empowerment among parents which was passed on to their children.
- The coordinator took any opportunity to expand the program and collaborate with other community programs.

- All staff (coordinator, principal, teachers and aides) had positive attitudes towards people—they respected the parents of at-risk children, believed that they would respond to positive programs, and believed that they would become involved in their children's education.

SOURCE: Wikelund, K. *Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990.

## VII-4. National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education Recommendations

Using information gleaned from several programs, the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education recommends the following key steps for implementing parent involvement efforts.

- Assess parent needs and interests about ways of working with the schools.
- Set clear and measurable goals with parent and community input.
- Hire and train a parent liaison to directly contact parents and coordinate parent activities. The liaison should be bilingual as needed and sensitive to the needs of parents and the community, including the non-English speaking community.
- Develop public relations to inform parents, businesses, and the community about parent involvement policies and programs through newsletters, slide shows, videotapes, local newspapers, and such.
- Recognize the importance of a community's historic, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural resources in generating interest in parent participation. Even when there are problems, such as desegregation issues, a parent involvement program can serve as a forum for discussion and a conduit for change.
- Use creative forms of communication between educators and parents. This may include parent/teacher conferences which yield individual parent/child and teacher/child plans, newsletters mailed to parents etc.
- Mobilize parents as volunteers in the school assisting teachers with instructional tasks, assisting in the lunchroom, and helping with administrative functions. Parents might act as volunteer tutors, classroom aides, and invited speakers.
- Train educators to include techniques for surmounting barriers between parents and schools so that teachers, administrators, and parents interact as partners.
- Integrate information and assistance with other aspects of the total learning environment. Parents should have access to information about such services as health care and nutrition programs provided by schools or community agencies.
- Schedule programs and activities flexibly to reach diverse parent groups.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of parent involvement programs and activities on a regular basis.

SOURCE: National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. *Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts.* Staff Development. Washington, DC, n.d.

## VII-5. Principal's and Teachers' Roles in Family Involvement Initiatives

There are several key players in the organization, development, and implementation of effective parent involvement programs, but two critical roles are those of school principals and classroom teachers.

*The principal should:*

- Provide educational leadership for all of the other key players—school personnel, students, parents and families, and other community members.
- Set the tone for the school climate as positive, friendly, open to the community, serving all children equally.
- Overtly recognize and affirm the fundamental premises of parent involvement (all children can learn, parent involvement is a valuable resource, all parents/families can have an impact, etc.).
- Take time to get to know the community (or communities) served by your school—the history of their interactions with the school, their values and customs, local heroes, favorite pastimes, child-reading practices, worries, and aspirations.
- Assess school and community perceptions of needs and available resources.
- Encourage opportunities for staff and parents and other community members to get to know each other.
- Lead a team of staff, parents, and community members who together design and develop the school's effective parent involvement program.
- Require and encourage staff members to make use of parent involvement as a resource.
- Provide for and facilitate staff training in parent involvement.
- Designate staff to coordinate the school's parent involvement efforts.
- Facilitate the provision of parent training in parent education and other topics of interest to parents and family members.
- Establish mechanisms for open, two-way communication between the school and the community, and encourage their use.
- Provide opportunities for parents to have a voice in school managements decisions.
- Communicate regularly with all other key players, actively soliciting their input (both formally and informally).
- Monitor the program and encourage the team to evaluate progress and revise program activities as necessary, using multiple indicators of program success.
- Acknowledge and reward outstanding efforts by teachers, coordinators, outreach workers, parents, community members, and children.

*Classroom teachers should:*

- Maintain high expectations for every child to learn and achieve.
- Examine, their own assumptions about ability and interest (based on behavior, nonstandard English or lack of English, physical appearance or family background) and remain alert to negative images.
- Take time to get to know the community (or communities) represented by the children they teach—the history of their interactions with the school, their values and customs, local heroes, favorite pastimes, child-rearing practices, worries, and aspirations.

- Treat all children and their families with respect.
- Welcome every family into the classroom and make them feel comfortable in the school.
- Establish and maintain open, two-way communication with parents and other family members.
- Provide a variety of options for parents to collaborate with you in the teaching of their children (including homework activities, class projects, volunteer work in the classroom, and on field trips, fundraising, etc.).
- Participate in staff training about parent involvement.
- Participate in school activities designed to help staff and families get to know each other.
- View cultural diversity as a resource and teach children to value it.
- Identify and use ways to validate children's experiences outside of school and incorporate them into instructional activities.
- Collaborate with other professionals and parents to address particular children's learning or emotional problems.
- Take stock of their own parent involvement activities regularly, with input from other key players, and revise them as necessary.
- Never give up on any child.

SOURCE: Wikelund, K. *Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990.

## VII-6. Teacher Concerns about Parent Involvement

Common teacher concerns that impede the implementation of parent involvement activities include:

- Uncertainty about how to involve parents and, at the same time, maintain a role of the expert.
- Uncertainty about how to balance concern for the group with concern for the individual child.
- Concern that parents would try to take over teaching responsibilities and not follow the teacher's instructions and school regulations.
- Concern that parents would disrupt the classroom because they don't know how to work with children.
- Concern that parents would not keep commitments and honor the need to be confidential.
- Concern that parent involvement takes too much planning.

SOURCE: Becher, R. *Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1984. ED 247 032

## VII-7. Teachers' Needs Regarding Parent Involvement

Things can be done to help teachers succeed in parent involvement efforts. Teachers need:

- Help to realize that they already possess a number of the skills necessary for establishing successful programs.
- Support for their efforts, particularly when things don't work.
- Help in identifying their own feelings about various aspects of parent involvement.
- Help in developing conflict resolution rather than conflict avoidance strategies.
- Help in seeing the parent involvement process from the perspective of the parents, rather than solely from their own viewpoint.
- Help or reminders to select activities for parent involvement in terms of the goals and purposes of the program rather than because the activities look interesting or useful.
- Reminders to use the same skills they use in making friends when reaching out to parents.

SOURCE: Becher, R. *Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1984. ED 247 032.

## VII-8. Teachers' Behavior that Impacts Willingness to Involve Families

There are several key elements in teachers' behavior that impacts their willingness to engage in parent involvement activities.

- Teachers who use a variety of methods to involve parents believe it is possible to involve all parents regardless of their income and educational levels.
- Teachers who have had previous positive contact with the family are more likely to support and use parent involvement activities.
- Teachers have more positive attitudes about parent involvement when principals and other colleagues also support this concept.

SOURCE: Epstein, J.; and Becker, J. "A Survey of Teacher Practices," *Elementary School Journal.* 83(3), 1992.

## VII-9. Parent Involvement Training for School Staff

To help overcome one of the major barriers to parent involvement, the attitudes teachers often have toward parent involvement, Moles and D'Angelo suggest that the school staff should receive training in:

- Greeting and meeting parents and creating an inviting and non-threatening climate.
- Reaching out and not sitting together as the "school choir" at public meetings.
- Calling parents and using positively phrased language.
- Learning and understanding cultural, racial, and ethnic groups different from themselves and even sometimes their own groups.
- How to use volunteers effectively once they have them.
- Understanding why it is painful for some families to get involved (prior negative experiences; intimidation with our school language, etc.).
- Seeking parent representatives to initially sit on the school parent management team.

- Planning activities that do not stress out parents and teachers with too many evening meetings.

SOURCE: Moles, O. and D'Angelo, D. eds. *Building School-Family Partnerships for Learning: Workshops for Urban Educators. Washington.* DC: U.S. Department of Education, OERI., 1993.

## Suggested Group Activity

From your experiences as a teacher, share successes and failures in involving parents in the education of their children. Also share other community/parent involvement activities that you have experienced. Discuss what you have learned and why or why not you want to be a part of parent and community involvement efforts.

## VIII. BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

The rising number of community schools and the increasing number of mandates for community involvement are part of a trend that will affect teachers on an escalating scale. Teachers may find themselves faced with community involvement, quite often without input into, or knowledge of, the decision to implement such a program. They are frequently not involved in the planning for community involvement, even though they are critical in the process of integrating community and school.

Why are teachers not always involved, trained, and made an integral part of the whole process? One explanation might be the in-service education situation, or lack thereof, in many school districts. If the lack of in-service opportunities is the reality, teachers will need help in selecting and implementing practices and procedures that create and sustain meaningful community involvement that assists them in the process of educating students in their classroom.

The following unit focuses on practical ways to implement basic elements of parent and community involvement to enhance the learning process in the K-12 program:

- Communicating with parents is an area that is often not given enough attention. Effective two-way communication has many benefits for the student, the parent(s), and the teacher; it can also help avoid misunderstandings and misconceptions.
- Using volunteers in the classroom is one of the most rewarding areas of community involvement for the individual teacher. Volunteers can relieve the teacher of many tasks that do not require professional attention and provide additional reinforcement to classroom instruction.
- Using community resources in and out of the classroom is a way to give what goes on in the classroom a closer relationship with actual life situations, needs, and problems. The community can be used as a laboratory and as a supplement to classroom teaching.
- Making home visitations is a conscious recognition that school is not the most significant influence in the life of a student and that teachers need to take parents, the community, and students' peers into account when attempting to design curriculum, cope with behavior problems, or provide motivation. In addition, beyond the knowledge gained, making a home visit provides a teacher with the opportunity to develop or enhance the relationship between the student, the parent(s), the teacher, and the community environment.

### TOPICAL OUTLINES

The following are topical outlines and instructional units that could be used by trainers in a variety of settings or educators in group discussions or in-service sessions.

## VIII-1. Ways to Encourage Two-way Communication Between Home and School

School administrators and teachers can work together in a variety of ways to encourage communication between the school and the home.

- Regular personal phone calls from teachers and/or administrative staff to parents, for positive as well as negative reasons.
- 24-hour telephone message recorders, so parents can leave a message for teachers any time of day or night.
- 24-hour recorded message service, so parents and students can call for school announcements and messages on topics of particular concern.
- Dial-your-assignment recordings, so students and parents can call in at any time to check on homework assignments without having to speak directly to the teacher.
- Dial-a-teacher; selected teachers are available for questions on homework over the phone during certain hours of weekday evenings.
- Homework hotline.
- Parenting hotline.

SOURCE: Wikelund, K. R. *Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990.

## VIII-2. The First Letter Home

It is helpful for teachers to introduce themselves early in the school year. This can be done in several ways including a letter sent home with the students. Such a letter might contain the following:

- A greeting to parents.
- A list of supplies the student will need.
- An explanation for assigning and collecting homework and other class assignments.
- An indication of any monies the student will need during the year that is sensitive to those situations where money might not be available.
- Any forms that need to be completed and returned.
- Information about any special classes in which students might participate.
- An explanation of the grading system and how it is reported to parents.
- An open invitation to parents to call the teacher any time they feel it is necessary, including information on when it would be best to call.

SOURCE: Meyers, E., ed. *Teacher/Parent Partnership Handbook.* New York, NY: Impact II, 1989.

## VIII-3. Sample Letter to Parents Regarding Homework.

This sample letter is for parents of children at the elementary level.

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian:

Students, who consistently complete homework and hand it in on time, learn and reinforce essential basic skills; they increase self-confidence; and develop a positive lifetime attitude

toward learning. We want to provide some practical suggestions for helping your child at home with assignments.

- Help your child establish a regular routine for doing homework. Provide time and place for study that will include necessary materials. The study place should have good lighting and be reasonably quiet and free from distractions.
- Help your child recognize that homework is important to her/his learning. Be positive. Encourage and praise your child's efforts.
- Make suggestions in a positive way, i.e., "The teacher will understand your ideas better if your writing is easy to read."
- Assist students by offering advise, but make sure they do their own work. If your child does not understand the assignment or a particular problem, help your child write a question he or she can ask the teacher. Often writing a question about what is not understood will help clarify the child's thinking and help your child solve the problem.
- Communicate with teachers when an assignment is unclear or when your child has problems with an assignment. Don't make homework a family battleground.
- Help your child obtain and complete make-up assignments when he/she is absent. Call the school and ask for assignments.
- Help with assignments by checking for completion, neatness, and accuracy.

Thank you for your help! We hope you will give us ideas about how we can make homework expectations clearer and more consistent.

Sincerely,

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J.; Boruta, M.; and Daugherty, M. *Communicating with Parents.* San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education, 1988.

## VIII-4. Gaining Insights from Parents about Students' Learning and Behavior

The following is a sample of questions that might be put in the form of a brief questionnaire that a teacher can send to parents to get to know a child better. These questions might be used at the beginning of the school year, during a parent/teacher conference session, or mailed and then discussed over the phone.

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian,

I need your help to get to know your child better. The following is a list of questions that I would suggest as a discussion guide for our upcoming conference. Sharing this information with me will help me better understand and teach your child. All information you share will remain strictly confidential.

*Academic Progress*

1. What does your child have to say about his or her progress in school?
2. In what ways is your child working up to your expectations?

3. In what ways is your child not meeting your expectations?
4. What does your child like most about school?
5. In what one area would you most like to see your child improve this year?
6. In your child's opinion, what would make life at school more interesting or enjoyable?
7. What aspects of school work does your child consider most difficult?
8. What things at school tend to upset your child?

*Homework and Home-learning Activities*

9. How do you feel about the homework your child is expected to do?
10. How does your child react if you help with homework?
11. How often do you and your child read together?
12. What television programs do you and your child watch together?
13. What activities do you and your child especially enjoy doing together?
14. How does your child act if you correct a mistake or suggest an area to work on?

*Home Life and Behavior*

15. What types of activities take up your child's leisure time?
16. What kinds of chores does your child have at home?
17. How does your child handle chores you assign?
18. What does your child do when upset or angry?
19. What observations can you share about your child's relationship with peers?
20. How do you encourage good behavior at home?
21. How much sleep does your child usually get each night?
22. Are there any health, medical, or family concerns which might affect your child's performance in school?

Teacher Signature

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J.; Borutam, M.; and Daugherty, M. *Communicating with Parents*. San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education, 1988. (Adapted from Strom, R.D. and Bernard, H.W. 1982. *Educational Psychology*. Monterey, CA: Brook-Cole Publishers.)

## VIII-5. Gaining Insights from Students into Their Lives Outside of School

The following are activities teachers can use to learn about their students' lives outside of school:

To learn more about your students' daily lives:

- Have a group discussion about "a day in the life of...."
- Brainstorm with your students about questions to ask someone about their daily life.
- Have students write their own questions, then work in pairs interviewing each other.
- Have your students keep a diary or journal about their daily activities.
- Have students give oral reports about a day in their lives.

To learn more about reading and writing in your students' out-of-school environments:

- Have your students describe (in detail) the block they live on and make maps of it.
- Have them copy signs in their neighborhood.
- Have them look around their house for anything with writing on it and make a list.

- Have them bring in examples of things at home that they know how to read or write or written items for which they understand the use.
- Have students compile a notebook of written materials used in their daily lives.
- Discuss each child's notebook with the class to elicit other students' knowledge about the items.

To learn more about individual students' and families' interests:

- Send home a brief parent survey about the students' personal interests or hobbies, likes, dislikes. Be sure to include a question about "why my kid is great" and one about anything the parent/caregiver thinks the child might improve. Also include a section about the parents' own interests and expertise.
- Brainstorm with your students about their special interests and those of their family members.
- Have students bring in any materials they have at home about their interests or hobbies.
- Once you have identified special interests, bring in books, magazines, and newspaper articles about them for individual children to take home and read with other members of their families.
- Alert the school librarian about your students' special interest.
- Build other activities around these interests—oral reports, interviews, class discussions, field trips, videotapes, art projects, etc.

SOURCE: Wikelund, K. R. *Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990.

### VIII-6. Helpful Tips for Telephoning Parents

The following tips for telephoning parent(s) or guardian fall into two categories: good news and problems.

Tips for the introductory or good news call:

- Make notes ahead of time about what you want to say.
- Make sure you know family status before calling; parent's (guardian's) name may be different from the child's.
- Introduce and identify yourself.
- Ask if this is a good time to talk.
- Start with something positive.
- Use plain English with no jargon.
- Keep conversation short, simple, and to the point.
- Use active listening skills during the conversation; try to get parent involved rather than just you talking.
- Have a good conclusion.
- End by encouraging the parent to call if he/she has concerns.

Tips for the Call dealing with a problem

- Don't make this the first call you make.
- Choose your words carefully; make notes ahead of time; avoid jargon.
- Start off with something pleasant but then get to the point.
- Don't try to place blame.
- Avoid labels.
- Call as soon as possible after the problem comes up.
- Report objective information; be as specific as possible.
- Ask if parents have noticed any problems at home.
- Talk about the problem as a shared one.
- Actively listen for both facts and feelings.
- Make positive suggestions about what might be done; try to find solutions.
- Close conversation on a pleasant note if at all possible.
- Make a note about when you called and what was discussed; put in student's file.

SOURCE: McAfee, O. *Improving School-Home Communications. A Resource Notebook for Staff Developers.* Charleston, West Virginia: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1984.

## VIII-7. Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere for Parents

The physical appearance of a school building does a lot to encourage or discourage parent involvement. A physical structure that is foreboding and sends the message "keep out" does not do much to promote positive involvement. What is needed is a home-like environment which lets people know they are welcome. Some things schools can do to create this type of environment include:

- Display signs that *welcome* visitors and remove warning signs if possible. (If English is a second language for many parents, add welcome signs that reflect the language of families' country of origin.)
- Post a map that explains where to find the office.
- Arrange flowers, brightly colored murals, children's pictures, other displays, and/or photographs in an entrance hallway.
- Designate space for a parent center and have coffee, tea, or cold drinks available.
- Have a parent volunteer greet other parents at the entrance of the school at drop-off and pick-up times during the first week of school.
- Explain to secretaries, custodians, and other support staff their importance in supporting family involvement and brainstorm a variety of strategies for welcoming and supporting parents.
- Arrange for translators for parents who do not speak English.

SOURCE: Swap, S. *Developing Home-School Partnerships, From Concepts to Practice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1993.

## VIII-8. Training Needs for Parent-Teacher Conferences

Teachers need training and practice in conducting parent conferences, including the physical setting and format of the conference.

- Physical barriers, such as a desk or table between the teacher and parents should be removed and both should be seated next to each other.
- A grade book should not be the focus of the conference.
- Student work should be displayed around the room.
- Teachers should not do all the talking but should be prepared to ask personal questions about the student's behavior, interests, and activities at home and parents should be given equal time to ask questions about homework, exams, reports, grading periods, and school routines.
- Parents should be encouraged to talk about what their child has to say about school, and whether the parents have a good idea about what is going on in school.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers.* Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, 1994.

## VIII-9. Helpful Hints for Successful Conferences

- Make the parents comfortable, welcomed, and at home in your space. Get up and greet them with a handshake and a smile as opposed to staying seated at your desk.
- Thank parents for taking the time to attend the meeting, mention your awareness of any problems they may have had, such as bad weather, heavy traffic, today's busy schedule.
- Dress up. Let the parents know that you think they are important. Convey the feeling that you are proud to be their child's teacher, that you are proud to be a teacher, and that you are a professional.
- Have on hand as much information as possible regarding the student's performance, test marks, papers, drawings, personal comments, reactions, and attitudes. In short, show you have a thorough knowledge of that child.
- Find something complimentary to say about some aspect of the student's work, character, or personality. Slowly lead into the areas where improvement is needed. Tactfully, but firmly, stress the need for focusing on these deficiencies.
- Elicit suggestions from the parents as to how they can assist in the process of improving their child's performance, grades, attendance, or attitude. Discuss how they can become part of the solution and become involved. Enlist parents' assistance as much as possible.
- Provide parents with a schedule of tests, papers, mid-terms, and finals so they are aware of the dates. The schedule will facilitate their involvement and show them that you think guidance is needed both in school and at home.
- Most of all, listen and listen between the lines.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers.* Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education, 1994.

## VIII-10. Listening with Three Ears

Communication involves listening as well as speaking.

A good teacher listens with three ears:

- With one ear, listen to what people *are* saying. (This is relatively easy.)
- With a second ear, listen to what people *are not* saying. (This is more difficult.)
- With the third ear, listen to what people *want to say but don't know how to.* (This is the most difficult.

SOURCE: Adapted from Mecom, M., Mecum, T. "Seeking, Succeeding—Listening," *Sky Magazine*, October 1985; provided by Ed Brown, Georgia Southern University, September 1993.

## VIII-11. Listening: Some Observations

- Listening is not the same as hearing.
- Successful oral communication depends as much on the listener as the speaker.
- Concentration in listening is difficult because of the differential in speed between thinking and speaking.
- It has been said that people are the only creatures that can *talk* themselves into trouble. (Does that mean it is possible to *listen* one's way out?)
- What the listener perceives is being said is as important as what is actually said.
- Arthur Combs said, "A fact is not what is; a fact for any person is what he/she believes is so."
- J. C. Penney said, "The occupational disease of the poor leader is in his/her inability to listen."

SOURCE: Provided by Ed Brown, Georgia Southern University, September 1993.

## Suggested Group Activity

A) Send 4-5 members of the group out of the room so they cannot overhear what is being said. Have the remainder of the group make up a short message that contains a sense of urgency, a number or a statistic, and several specific actions to be taken.

For example:

> There is a small fire in the chem lab. Please go to the main office and call 911 for the fire department and sound the fire alarm. Then get a wheelchair and take it to room B-17, the special education classroom.

Call one person back into the room and have someone communicate the message. Then ask the person who received the message to call another person back into the room and repeat the message. Continue until the last person has been called back into the room, received the message, and repeated it to the rest of the group. Have the group discuss any changes in the original message, and when and how they occurred.

B) Divide into four groups. Have one group develop a skit on good procedures for setting up a parent-teacher conference and another group develop one on conducting a good parent-teacher conference. Have the other two groups develop skits on what to avoid doing.

## VIII-12. Invitation to Parent-Teacher Conference with Reply for Parents

Dear [Parent(s') or Guardian's Name]_____

So you may observe and discuss the progress your child is making in school and have a chance to ask questions about the school's program, you are invited to attend a parent-teacher conference.

Subject to your approval, your conference has been scheduled as follows:
(Include day of the week, actual date, time, school, and room)
If you cannot meet at the above date and time, please suggest another date and time. I would like to meet all my students' parents or guardians at least once during [ month].

This personal conference is an opportunity for us to better understand your child. With this information we can meet your child's needs more effectively.

I am looking forward to meeting with you.

_____ _____
Teacher Date

---

Tear Off and Return Lower Portion

[Name(s)_____
will attend the conference at_____ o'clock on_____.

__It will be impossible to attend the conference on the date specified. Two possible other times are:

_____
Day of Week Date Time

_____
Day of Week Date Time

Additionally, we are especially interested in discussing the following:_____

_____(Student's Name) (Parent's/Guardian's Signature)_____
Telephone_____

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers*. Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-13. Potential Fears about Volunteers in the Classroom

Sometimes, in the initial stages of a volunteer program, teachers may be reluctant to open their classroom to "outsiders," and parents and community members may also be reluctant to volunteer in a classroom.

Teachers may fear that a parent or community volunteer will:

- Recognize problem children at school and may add to their problem by making the community aware of school behavior.
- Compare professional and personal qualities of staff members.
- Take up too much of their time.
- Create confusion in the instructional program.
- Be critical of teachers.
- Increase already overwhelming responsibilities.
- Share confidential information acquired at school.
- Try to take over teaching responsibilities.
- Fail to keep their commitments, creating scheduling difficulties.
- Not follow a teacher's instructions or the school's regulations.
- Not know how to work productively with children.
- Use non-standard English or demonstrate other characteristics which the teacher does not want to introduce into a learning situation.

Other possible teacher fears are:

- They will not be able to establish a working relationship with parents.
- They will not be able to teach with other adults in the classroom.
- They will not be able to get along with all the parents.
- The use of parents in instructional activities may lower the school's or the teacher's educational standards.
- The use of parent volunteers may mean that the school system will hire fewer certified teachers than are really needed.

Parents and community members may be reluctant to volunteer because they:

- May fear or resent the teacher because they recall their own unhappy experience in school.
- May feel that the teacher does not appreciate the difficulties of parenthood and blames parents for the child's failure in school.
- May feel that the teacher doesn't know how to handle their child.
- May feel that the school does not spend enough time teaching the "Three R's."
- May feel that the school does not operate efficiently and that taxpayers' money is wasted on frills.
- May feel that the school encourages a lack of discipline.
- May feel that they may not be able to do anything worthwhile with the children.
- May feel that it is the job of the school to educate the child and to provide for his well-being during the school hours.

- May not approve of changes in the present school system and fear that parents in the classroom will disrupt the instructional program. They feel that their place is in the home just as the teacher's is in the classroom.
- May have younger children who are not in school; may lack transportation; may be too busy in the home; may be employed during school hours.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers*. Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-14. Basic Qualifications and Guidelines for Volunteers

A volunteer should:

- Like children and relate well to them.
- Be able to work under the direction of school professionals.
- Be interested in education and the community.
- Feel a commitment to the goals of the parent volunteer program.
- Want to help.
- Be dependable and in good health.
- Be willing to attend occasional in-service training sessions.

Basic guidelines for volunteers include:

- Respecting school policies.
- Giving children appropriate encouragement.
- Remembering discipline is the teacher's responsibility.
- Following education's code of ethics.
- Avoiding evaluating children.
- Getting to know the children.
- Giving deserved praise.
- Providing motivation through individual attention.
- Being consistent and objective.
- Being honest with children.
- Respecting the child and his/her privacy.
- Being a good listener.
- Being an effective volunteer.
- Sharing ideas with the teacher.
- Being thoroughly prepared.
- Maintaining a sense of humor.
- Remembering to keep calm.
- Maintaining a positive attitude.
- Keeping one's commitment.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers*. Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-15. Do's and Don'ts for Using Volunteers

Do's

- Invite volunteers to serve as partners in your school.
- Clearly define for staff members and volunteers the differences in their tasks and roles.
- Encourage your staff to help decide which tasks volunteers should perform.
- Give volunteers tasks that complement the services of paid professional staff members.
- Assign one staff member the responsibility for administering the volunteer program.
- Provide an orientation program to acquaint volunteers with the school's functions, goals, and methods, as well as the nature of their tasks.
- Provide an ongoing, regularly scheduled training program.
- Request a specific commitment of time and/or resources from volunteers.
- Make assignments based upon skills, knowledge, interests, availability, and resources.
- Express appreciation. Volunteers need recognition as much as paid staff members.

Don'ts

- Regard volunteers as an appendage to your program, perhaps only to be tolerated.
- Leave role definition vague so that staff members and volunteers are unclear about who has responsibility in which area.
- Leave task identification entirely up to administrative personnel or the volunteers themselves.
- Use volunteers as a substitute for paid staff members.
- Distribute responsibility for administration of volunteer services among several staff members, especially at the beginning of the program.
- Put volunteers to work without knowing how to perform their tasks, and allow them to learn through trial and error.
- Be vague about what is expected of volunteers in terms of time and resources.
- Overuse, underuse, or misuse volunteers.
- Allow volunteers to function entirely on their own or in isolation from other volunteers and staff members.
- Ignore the need for encouragement and expressions of appreciation.

SOURCE: Decker, L. E. and Decker, V. A. *Home/School Community Involvement*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1988.

## VIII-16. Common Mistakes in Recruiting Volunteers

- Recruit before job skills and needs are known.
- Use a scattershot effort not designed to appeal to the kinds of volunteers needed or the skills required.
- Do not take the time to interview and make meaningful task assignments that take advantage of volunteers' skills and interests.

SOURCE: Stehle, V. "Finding New Ways to Recruit and Keep Today's Volunteers." *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, June 29, 1993.

## VIII-17. Avoiding Problems in Recruiting Volunteers

- Do an overall manpower needs assessment to determine what can and cannot be assigned to volunteers.
- Write job descriptions for volunteers.
- Go after volunteers with specific skills.
- Offer flexible hours.
- Seek advice and assistance from special state and university-sponsored volunteer offices.
- Whenever possible, use personal contacts to attract volunteers. Get staff members and other volunteers to enlist friends, family members, and colleagues.
- Tailor publicity to appeal to members of particular racial or ethnic groups.
- Be cautious about using newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio to recruit volunteers; conduct a careful check of respondents' backgrounds for possible criminal or child abuse records.
- Make appeal upbeat, not a desperate plea for help.
- Stress ways that volunteers will benefit from working with the organization.
- Offer-short term opportunities.
- Train volunteers when necessary for the jobs they are to do.
- Eliminate barriers that make people reluctant to volunteer—take the uncertainty out of volunteering. Ask for responsible participation, but be flexible, because people's schedules change.

SOURCE: Stehle, V. "Finding New Ways to Recruit and Keep Today's Volunteers." *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, June 29, 1993.

## VIII-18. Seventy-Six Ways Volunteers Can Help at the Elementary School

These suggestions are only a beginning. You will think of other ways that volunteers can help.

1. Tell stories to children.
2. Listen to children read.
3. Conduct flash card drills.
4. Provide individual help.
5. Assist in learning centers.
6. Set up learning centers.
7. Help contact parents.
8. Reproduce materials.
9. Work in clinic or library.
10. Check out audio-visual equipment.
11. Practice vocabulary with non-English speaking students.
12. Make instructional games.
13. Play instructional games.
14. Play games at recess.
15. Assist with visual tests.
16. Prepare visual materials.
17. Develop programmed materials.
18. Grade papers.

19. Prepare bulletin boards.
20. Help with book fairs.
21. Work with underachievers and gifted.
22. Reinforce spelling or vocabulary words.
23. Help select library books.
24. Assist with field trips.
25. Make props for plays.
26. Set up or run bookstore or book exchange.
27. Gather resource materials.
28. Help children learn to type.
29. Help children with arts and crafts.
30. Help with cooking projects.
31. Check out books from public library.
32. Set up experiments.
33. Take attendance.
34. Collect lunch money.
35. Escort children to bathroom, library, cafeteria.
36. Work on perceptual activities.
37. Make list of library resources.
38. Visit a sick child at home.
39. Work with a handicapped child.
40. Prepare teaching materials.
41. Record grades.
42. Supervise groups taking tests.
43. Discuss careers or hobbies.
44. Show a video to a group.
45. Help young children with walking on a balance beam, jumping rope, or skipping.
46. Reinforce learning of the alphabet.
47. Reinforce recognition of numerals.
48. Drill recognition of color words.
49. Talk to children; be a friend.
50. Help children with motor skill problems.
51. Help children learn a foreign language.
52. Play a musical instrument.
53. Help students who play instruments.
54. Make puppets.
55. Dramatize a story.
56. Help with handwriting practice.
57. Set up a "grocery store" to practice math skills.
58. Make reading carrels from boxes.
59. Drill spelling words.
60. Tell stories with puppets or flannel board.
61. Assist with singalongs.

62. Show slides or videos of life in other countries, parts of the United States, crafts, or games.
63. Discuss care and training of pets.
64. Demonstrate different artistic abilities.
65. Discuss life from the point of view of a person with a handicap and the importance of understanding others.
66. Discuss different handicaps.
67. Discuss attitudes, feelings, and emotions.
68. Share ethnic backgrounds and experiences.
69. Discuss farm life and farm animals.
70. Demonstrate gardening skills and other hobbies or abilities.
71. Help prepare assembly programs.
72. Discuss holidays and special occasions.
73. Discuss aspects of safety.
74. Share information about local history.
75. Demonstrate various pioneer crafts.
76. Assist in preparing courses in photography, creative dramatics, knitting, various types of dance.

SOURCE: Little Rock Volunteers in Public Schools. *School/Community Partnership Program*. Little Rock, AK. n d.

### VIII-19. Twenty-Five Ways Working People Can Help at School

With more and more parents working, many are unable to volunteer during regular school hours. Here are some ideas of how to get these individuals involved at times when they may not be at work.

1. Saturday work parties beautifying the school yard, building playground structures, planting shrubs or trees, and painting murals.
2. Saturday field trips.
3. Serve as a resource volunteer regarding various kinds of jobs (police officer, fire fighter, baker, truckdriver, etc.) or other areas of specialized knowledge.
4. Work on a school newsletter gathering news, editing, typing, etc.
5. Help with a fundraising project held on a weekend: car washes, cake sales, bazaars, carnivals, barbecues, flea markets, and garage sales.
6. Take a "business person's lunch" and play in the yard with youngsters during lunch hour.
7. Make educational games at home or during "make and take" sessions—game boards, drill cards, and other learning materials.
8. Collect materials of any type for art projects: wallpaper, free materials, paper, wood, old crayons, cloth, etc.
9. Post a school volunteer recruitment poster in one's shop or business.
10. Contact people who can assist the school program in various ways.
11. Get release time from employer to assist at school.

12. Take pupils on a tour of working parents' shops or businesses during the school week or on the weekend.
13. Write down ideas regarding art projects or enrichment programs and share them with a school or academic supervisor.
14. Attend PTA or parent group meetings. All parents should be encouraged to support these groups.
15. Help with a potluck dinner. Each family brings food to reflect their ethnic heritage.
16. Type PTA newsletters, general school notes, proposals, classroom assessment projects, etc.
17. Show slides or pictures from one's collection. People often have slides from trips they have taken around the country or world.
18. Repair toys and classroom materials. Teachers may not have the skills or equipment to do this.
19. Sew costumes for plays, pillows for rest time, and puppets.
20. Do woodwork at home. Build room dividers, learning centers or electric boards out of scrap wood and cardboard.
21. Ask friends, relatives or other community members to volunteer. All of us can be recruiters of volunteers. How about grandma or grandpa or friends at work?
22. Tutor a child in an after school/night time tutorial center.
23. Make attendance calls. Phone the parents of students who miss school to make sure they are aware of the child's absence.
24. Childcare. Offer to occasionally keep the children of parents who are willing to participate in a special school project or event.
25. If you still need ideas, ask a principal, teacher, or volunteer office how you can help after school is out for the day or on the weekend.

SOURCE: Little Rock Volunteers in Public Schools. *School/Community Partnership Program*. Little Rock, AK. n.d.

### VIII-20. Request for Volunteer Assistance

(To be used by teachers who want a volunteer in their classrooms.)

Teacher_____ Date_____
Subject_____ Room_____
I would like a volunteer to help with the following teaching tasks:

_____
_____
_____

I would like a volunteer with the following clerical tasks:

_____
_____

I would the volunteer to come on: (days and times)

_____
_____
_____

I would like a community resource person to present or demonstrate in the following areas:

_____
_____
_____

Comments:

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers.* Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

### VIII-21. Teacher Evaluation of the Volunteer Program

The following questionnaire evaluates a volunteer program from a teacher's perspective.

1. List the ways you have had classroom volunteers help you:
   _____
   _____
2. How often do you have classroom volunteers help you?_____
3. Do you feel the volunteers have been adequately trained to do the kinds of things you want? __YES__NO
4. In what areas do they need more preparation?_____
   _____
5. Do you find you must spend more than 15 minutes planning for or explaining an activity to a volunteer? __YES__NO
6. If you answered "yes" to number five, do you mind spending this extra time? __YES__NO
7. Have you ever had to re-do a classroom volunteer's work? __YES__NO
8. Do you find that classroom volunteer assistance gives you more time to plan and/or work with the children? __YES__NO
9. Has there been any evidence of changes in your students as a result of having volunteers in your classroom? __YES__NO
   Comments on kinds of changes:_____
10. What suggestions do you have for the program?_____
    _____
11. Other comments:_____
12. What other kind of activities would you like volunteers to be trained to do?_____
    _____

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers.* Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-22. Training Volunteers to Work in the Classroom

Volunteers who are going to be involved with children in the classroom need to have some instruction before they begin working. Teachers and volunteer coordinators will want to ensure that either group or one-on-one training is given. Possible topics include:

- How to begin a lesson.
- Expectations for the children.
- Learning styles of various children.
- Goals of the instruction.
- Proper procedure to handle discipline problems.
- Ideas for expanding on a lesson once the initial concept is taught.
- Time limits.
- Lesson closure.
- Communication about children's progress.

SOURCE: New Hampshire Partners in Education. *Partnership News*, 22(1), Fall 1993.

## VIII-23. Retention of Volunteer Support

- Volunteers appreciate a feeling of belonging to the educational team. They develop a sense of pride and ownership. Nurture this feeling of belonging.
- Monitor the volunteer-teacher placements. Be sensitive to problems and encourage flexibility when change is needed.
- Provide ongoing in-service training as appropriate.
- Train teachers to work with volunteers. Many problems can be avoided if volunteers and teachers understand mutual expectations.
- Provide feedback about volunteer's performance and suggestions about teaching, discipline, or human relations techniques. Volunteers appreciate the fact that teachers care.
- Use suggestions from evaluations when possible. Analyze the information received, because it is the pulse of the program.

SOURCE: Adapted from handouts provided by M. Averett, Volunteer Coordinator, Lynchburg, Virginia, Public Schools, 1990.

## VIII-24. Home Visits Can Serve a Variety of Goals

Home visits can be conducted by teachers, community aides, or trained volunteers. Such visits can be used to:

- Welcome new families to the school community.
- Survey parents for their views on school policies and programs.
- Report on student progress in school.
- Solve specific problems.
- Demonstrate home learning activities to parents.

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J.; Boruta, M.; and Daugherty, M. *Communicating with Parents*. San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education, 1988.

## VIII-25. Preparation for a Home Visit

- Get information from teachers about the student's classroom performance, daily classroom routines, discipline, and homework policies. Make notes and be sure you understand the specifics for each child. Try to find out about any current events that may be affecting families in their communities.
- Contact parent(s) or guardian, establish rapport, and explain that you want to share information about:
  - how the child spends time in school and what happens in a typical day in the child's classroom;
  - what's happening at the school in general;
  - ideas for helping his/her child at home.
- Be sure to let parent(s) or guardian know that you feel your communication about these things will help the child do better in school.
- Set up an appointment time when parent(s) or guardian can talk for about 45 minutes, uninterrupted. Be clear about where the meeting will happen, how to get there, whether an interpreter is needed.

SOURCE: Chrispeels, J.; Boruta, M.; and Daugherty, M. *Communicating with Parents.* San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education, 1998.

## VIII-26. Tips to Remember When Calling

- Ask for the person by full name.
- Introduce yourself and explain your purpose in calling (to share with them some information that can help their child).
- Open the conversation by briefly telling something about your own family, your background in the community, and your connection to the school.
- Be positive. The way you communicate your attitude forms a lasting impression.
- Convey a genuine interest in the person you're calling. Here, interest is the key word, particularly an interest in their child. Express an interest in the future of their child and they will express an interest in your ideas or projects.
- Be persistent, in a friendly manner. Don't give up until the person clearly expresses that he/she is not interested in your call.
- Finally, stop calling when you get tired. It's difficult to be friendly when you're tired.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers.* Classroom Hangout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-27. How to Conduct a Home Visit

- Reestablish rapport.
- Go over purposes and dates for upcoming school events.
- Describe the child's daily routine in the classroom.
- Go over the discipline policy for the classroom.
- Go over the homework policy.

- Discuss ways to help with homework (provide family-friendly homework ideas).
- Ask the parent(s) or guardian if any learning problems have been observed at home or if they have any other specific concerns.
- Discuss how the parent(s) or guardian can get help to solve these problems.
- Close the meeting.
- Evaluate yourself after each session.
- Send a follow-up note or call to reinforce your visit.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers*. Classroom Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## VIII-28. A Laundry List of Do's and Don'ts in the Student's Home

- Converse—don't interrogate. At all times, when you are in the home of the parent, remember that you are there for the purpose of establishing a relationship as well as to gather desired information.
- When in the home, be honest about your feelings but never complain about school policies, administrators, fellow teachers, students, or other parents. Such behavior does not assist you in establishing professional rapport with anyone, and may cause the parent to be concerned about how you will discuss him/her with others.
- Don't be preoccupied with your own professionalism to the extent that you allow yourself to be perceived as cold or aloof. You are human. Allow your humanity to show.
- If children are present in the home, be certain to greet them. If you don't know their names, then learn them and use them.
- If the parent(s) or guardian recommends that you use first names, take advantage of this opportunity to establish informality.
- If it is necessary to take notes, do so in a way that does not alarm the parent(s) or guardian. Be certain that they know what you are writing. One way to do this is to read it back to them as if to request that they check it for accuracy.
- In some situations, it may be desirable to record certain agreements. In such cases let the parents have a copy immediately; encourage them to write it themselves. If you make referrals, write them as well.
- When you enter the house you will probably be asked to sit down. Do so and try to be and look comfortable and relaxed. Don't sit on the edge of the chair as if you are ready to spring out the door.
- Don't watch the clock. If the appointment is scheduled for a certain length of time, it may be appropriate for you to look at your watch.
- If the parent(s) or guardian cannot give you their complete attention, attempt to fit into the activities that are preoccupying them. If for example, you notice that it is necessary for one of the parents to continually run to the kitchen to check the oven, suggest that you move to the kitchen.
- If your host offers you something to eat or a cup of coffee, accept it. Eating together has long been a social institution related to communication.

- Although you are there to observe the household as well as to communicate with the parents, don't allow yourself to be observed scrutinizing every detail of the house and its inter-workings.
- When the parents or others in the house are talking, either to you or to someone else, listen actively. Do not be so preoccupied with your agenda that you fail to respond to theirs.
- Break the ice. It may be difficult for the parents to relax with you. Therefore, you must attempt to create a comfortable situation by conversing on subjects that are not threatening. Commenting on the house or the weather is not beneath the level of conversation that is sometimes necessary. After you believe the situation is relaxed enough, go gradually into the business at hand.
- Before the visit has concluded be certain that at some point you made at least one positive comment about the household, the children, some article of furniture etc.
- Dress in a comfortable way. Remember that the more formally you are dressed, the more formal you will appear. This is not to suggest that you should wear recreational clothing, but that you should not be over dressed.
- If you are visiting in a home in which the parent(s) or guardian earn very little money, avoid what may appear to be an ostentatious display of your relatively high economic level.
- If the parent(s) or guardian you are visiting normally converse in a language different than yours, and if you do not speak their primary language well enough to conduct a professional conference, bring with you someone who can translate.
- At the end of the meeting summarize any agreements that were made and verify timetables that may be relevant. Go over your list of objectives for the meeting to be certain that nothing was forgotten.

SOURCE: Schoeny, D. *Community Involvement for Classroom Teachers*. Class Handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1995.

## Suggested Group Activity

Select members of your group to role play a home visit of a teacher to:

- A single parent, low-income mother of two pre-schoolers in addition to your student who is a behavior problem in school.
- A middle class family with one child (your student), who both work, and the student has a behavior problem in school.

Compare the approaches—differences and similarities— in the two visits.

## IX. Closing Thoughts

The inescapable conclusion from all the evidence is that when it comes to making sure that students get a good education, schools simply can't do it alone. Education, at its best, is a team effort involving schools, the communities they serve, students, and families. It is also an inescapable conclusion that teachers play a significant and influential role in the creation and sustainment of a team effort.

The preceding units have presented the rationale for family and community involvement, implementation models, strategies for creating and sustaining a program, tips, and suggestions. This final section in the form of a "final exam" and a "fable" provides additional food for thought about one's own attitudes and actions concerning parent and community involvement.

### IX-1. Final Exam on Parent and Community Involvement: From Concepts to Practice.

Good afternoon! The following exam will assess your knowledge in the area of teacher-parent partnerships. Read each item and all choices carefully before selecting the best answer. Choose one answer only for each item.

1. What is a teacher-parent partnership?
   a. Teacher/parent associates
   b. Teacher/parent colleagues
   c. One who is on the same team as another
   d. All of the above

2. How important is a teacher-parent partnership?
   a. Extremely important
   b. Very, very, very important
   c. Tremendously important
   d. All of the above

3. What are some ways to get to know your students' parents?
   a. Introduce yourself at the beginning of the year by sending each family a card thanking them for the privilege of having their child in your classroom, and following up with a week night telephone call.
   b. Let the parents know if you yourself are both a parent and teacher; they will appreciate your dual role and coinciding perspectives.
   c. In order to establish a rapport with the parents and make the first open-house experience very relaxing for all involved, encourage the parents to get together with you as a group or team prior to the formal event.
   d. All of the above

4. What are some ways to break down barriers to teacher-parent partnerships?
   a. If one of your students happens to mention an important event taking place during the approaching weekend (Bill's soccer championship, Mom's final exams), express an interest and share in the excitement by telephoning the family for the outcome.
   b. Make a telephone call promoting a meeting on neutral grounds. "Hello Mrs. Jones! How are you? I am considering doing some paperwork in the playground area after school and wondered if that might be a good time to discuss Cindy's progress?"
   c. Utilize self-disclosure techniques during conversations: "I really admire your diligence in helping Larry with his homework. I must tell you that he was very excited to hear you were able to come today."
   d. All of the above.

5. How could you provide parents with guidelines on getting the most out of their meetings with the teacher?
   a. Compile a list based on a little personal rese[illegible], and send it to parents prior to the first meeting. Include such areas as: work/study habits, home and school responsibilities, field trips, major projects, behavioral management, and general comments, questions and concerns.
   b. Send home an invitation to the meeting that has been artistically designed by the children and note the areas which you, the teacher, will cover.
   c. Send home a sample dialogue of a staged, upbeat conference between teacher and parent.
   d. All of the above.

6. What mechanisms could parents use to alert teachers to problems?
   a. If "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"...then how about "An apple today means parents have something to say." If a child brings an apple on any given day, it would give notice that Mom and Dad need a call.
   b. Inform parents at the beginning of the year that a simple signature on the homework sent home is sufficient (Mrs. Thompson). However, a formal signature (Mrs. Dolores J. Thompson) notifies the teacher to call the parent.
   c. Provide parents with an all purpose form which they can use to notify you of problems and successes.
   d. All of the above.

7. How should you manage an effective teacher-parent conference?
   a. Physically greeting parents at the classroom door gives them a welcome feeling. Allowing them to be seated next to you at the table, as opposed to across from you, puts them on an even level.
   b. The day before the conference have the students bring in a complete set of their own clothes. Have them stuff the clothes with paper and make a head out of a stuffed paper bag with a self-portrait face on the front. Have the students place their academically inclined dummies on their desks. The classroom full of surrogate students will throw a bit of humor into what is sometimes a tense situation.

c. During the conference, be friendly, specific, positive, direct, confident, knowledgeable, professional, human, attentive, patient, realistic, organized, thorough, enthusiastic, and ambitious.

d. All of the above.

8. How can you give bad news helpfully?

a. Boost the negatives with positives. "Suzie is a serious child and tries hard to succeed. She has the ability to do excellent work but is held back by tenseness." "Bill is a friendly child. However, he needs to develop more confidence in himself."

b. Avoid jargon. If the child bugs other kids, he is "overcritical and aggressive." If she doesn't ever try, she is "inconsistent and inattentive." Constant clowning becomes "restless and talkative."

c. After discussing problems or potential problems with the parents, have some possible solutions available to help form the foundation of a program that both you and the parent can devise, as a team. Include Mom and Dad in deciding whether contingency contracts, reinforcers (tangible and edible), star charts, bonus points, special days, extra-curricular activities, hugs, praise, or teacher-helper status would be most effective.

d. All of the above.

This is the conclusion of the exam. If you chose letter "D" for all of your answers, now is the time to give yourself an A+.

SOURCE: Meyers, E., ed. *Teacher/Parent Partnership Handbook*. New York, NY: Impact II, 1989.

## IX-2. A Fable about Practically Nothing

Once upon a time, there was a task force to design a school's parent and community involvement initiative that had only four members. It was a task force not unlike those of our civic clubs, service clubs, church councils, even our professional and technical societies.

The four members were named *Somebody*, *Everybody*, *Anybody*, and *Nobody*. All four declared that they supported the aims and objectives of parent and community involvement efforts.

But *Everybody* was either a golfer, bowler, gardener, or fisherman and used her spare time and talents that way, or stayed at home with friends.

*Anybody* wanted to go to meetings of the task force, but didn't because he was afraid that *Somebody* might give him a job to do, and he just wanted to belong, not work.

*Nobody* went to the task force meeting.

Of the four, *Nobody* was the best. For instance, when the task force needed a chair for an important committee, *Everybody* thought that *Anybody* should be willing to take on an important job like that and *Somebody* observed that *Everyone* ought to.

Guess who finally got the job? That's right—*Nobody*.

And when the four learned that there was a new resident in the community who was an expert in community involvement, *Everybody* thought that *Somebody* ought to invite her to join the task force. *Anybody* could have extended the invitation, but didn't.

And can you guess who finally did get around to asking her? That's right—*Nobody* took the job.

And do you know what finally happened to that task force. With *Nobody* doing the jobs which had to be done, the task force amounted to Practically Nothing, which is the real name of a great many task forces, despite their fancy names and high ideals.

Now the moral of the story is this: When you join a task force, you must be willing to work at accomplishing its aims and objectives, for if you do not, others will call you *Nobody*, regardless of your real name, and your task force will become Practically Nothing.

SOURCE: Decker, L. E. Class handout. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1993. (Original source unknown.)

## NATIONAL COALITION FOR PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION (NCPIE)

The following are members of NCPIE that have reference materials to further assist with the development of initiative for parent and community involvement in education.

AARP
Grandparent Information Center
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2288
Fax 202-434-6474

Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20009
202-884-8259
Fax 202-884-8405

Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20009
202-884-8102
Fax 202-884-8400

Access ERIC
1600 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3172
800-LET-ERIC
301-251-5467
Fax 301-251-5767

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036-2412
202-293-2450

American Association of School Administrators
1801 North Moore Street
Arlington, VA 22209
703-875-0754
Fax 703-528-2146

American Federation of Teachers/AFL-CIO
555 New Jersey Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-393-8642
Fax 202-879-4537

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
1112 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-835-3600
Fax 202-223-1253

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1250 N. Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-1402
703-549-9110 x502
Fax 703-549-3891

Betty Phillips Center for Parenthood Education
Box 81
Peabody College of
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN 37203
615-322-8080
Fax 615-322-8999

Buddy System Project
17 West Market Street
Suite 960
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-464-2074
Fax 317-464-2080

CeDAR
2000 L Street, NW, #601
Washington, DC 20036
202-223-1593
Fax 202-785-3849

Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-516-8807
Fax 410-516-8890

Center for Revitalization of Urban Education
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-7091
Fax 202-822-7997

Center for Law and Education NCCE
1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20009
202-882-1582
Fax 202-462-7687

Center for the Study of Parent Involvement
370 Camino Pablo
Orinda, CA 94563
510-254-0110
Fax 510-254-4870

Center for the Improvement of Child Caring
11331 Venture Boulevard, Suite 103
Studio City, CA 91604-3147
818-980-0903
Fax 818-753-1054

Cities in Schools, Inc
9045 Ewing
Evanston, IL 60203
708-674-8817
708-674-8276
Fax 708-674-2502

Council for Exceptional Children
1922 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
703-264-9406
Fax 703-620-4334

Council of the Great City Schools
1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 702
Washington, DC 20004
202-393-2427 x210
Fax 202-393-2400

Education Publishing Group
The Statler Building, Suite 1215
20 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116
617-542-6500 x128
800-927-6006
Fax 617-542-6564

ERIC CUE
Box 40
Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027
212-678-3433
Fax 212-678-4048

Families and Work Institute
330 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001
212-465-2044
Fax 212-465-8637

Family Service America
1319 F Street, NW, Suite 204
Washington, DC 20004
202-347-1124
Fax 202-393-4517

Family Impact Seminars
1100 17th Street, NW, Suite 901
Washington, DC 20036
202-467-5114
Fax 202-223-2329

Family Resource Coalition
200 S. Michigan Ave, #1520
Chicago, IL 60604-2404
312-341-0900 x110
Fax 312-341-9361

Hispanic Policy Development Project
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-8414
Fax 202-822-9120

Home and School Institute
Mega Skills Education Center
1500 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036-5649
202-466-3633
Fax 202-833-1400

Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, #310
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-8405
Fax 202-872-4050

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02215
617-353-3309
Fax 617-353-8444

International Reading Association
1040 Delf Drive
McLean, VA 22101
703-846-8608
Fax 703-207-0257

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1509 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-1426
202-232-8777
800-424-2460
Fax 202-328-1846

National Association of Elementary School Principals
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-684-3345
Fax 703-548-6021

National Association for Partners in Education
209 Madison Street, Suite 401
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-836-4880
Fax 703-836-6941

National Association of School Psychologists
Urban School Psychology Programs
Howard University
School of Education
2400 6th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20059
202-806-5196
202-806-7350
Fax 202-806-7018

National Association of Secondary School Principals
1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22090
703-860-0200 x273
Fax 703-476-5432

National Association of State Boards of Education
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-684-4000
Fax 703-836-2313

National Association of State Directors of Vocational and Technical Education
444 North Capitol Street, NW, #830
Washington, DC 20001-1512
202-737-0303
Fax 202-737-1106

National Black Child Development Institute
1023 15th Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
202-562-0763
Fax 202-234-1738

National Center for Family Literacy
325 West Main Street, Suite 200
Louisville, KY 40202-4251
502-584-1133
Fax 502-584-0172

National Coalition of Title 1/Chapter 1 Parents
National Parent Center
9th & D Streets, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-547-9286
Fax 202-544-2813

National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91A
Fairfax, VA 22030-2401
703-359-8973
Fax 703-359-0972

National Council of La Raz
810 First Street, NE, #300
Washington, DC 20002-4205
202-289-1380
Fax 202-289-8173

National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-5111
803-656-2599
Fax 803-656-0136

National Head Start Association
201 N. Union Street, Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-739-0875
Fax 703-548-8305

National Information Center for Children & Youth with Disabilities
1875 Connecticut Ave, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20009-1202
202-884-8200
Fax 202-884-8441

National Institute for Literacy
800 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20202-7560
202-632-1522
Fax 202-632-1512

National Middle School Association
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370
Columbus, OH 43229-6292
614-895-4730
Fax 614-895-4750

National PTA
8616 Etta Drive
Springfield, VA 22152-2705
703-644-7333
Fax 703-644-4035

National Urban League
500 East 62nd Street
New York, NY 10021-8379
212-310-9000
Fax 212-310-9219

Parents, Inc.
270 Commerce Drive
Ft. Washington, PA 19034
215-628-2402
Fax 215-628-9423

Parent Institute
P.O. Box 7474
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
703-323-9170
Fax 703-323-9173

Parents for Public Schools
c/o Apco Associates
1155 21st Street, NW , #1000
Washington, DC 20036
202-778-6323
Fax 202-466-6006

Parents as Teachers National Center
9374 Olive Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132
314-432-4330
Fax 314-432-8963

Project Parents, Inc
24 Appleton Street
Boston, MA 02116
617-451-0360

Quality Education for Minorities Network
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 350
Washington, DC 20036
202-659-1818 x24
Fax 202-659-5408

Resource Center on Educational Equity
Council of Chief State School Officers
1 Massachusetts Ave, NW, #700
Washington, DC 20001-1431
202-336-7033
Fax 202-408-8072

RMC Research
1815 N. Ft Myer Drive, Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22209
703-558-4800
Fax 703-558-4823

School Improvement Council Assistance Project
023 College of Education
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
803-777-7658
Fax 803-777-0023

Webster's International, Inc.
5729 Cloverland Place
Brentwood, TN 37027
800-727-6833
Fax 615-373-1030

## About the Authors

**Larry Decker** has recently been named the Charles Stewart Mott Professor, an Eminent Scholar Chair in Community Education, at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton. Until accepting the position he had been a professor in the department of educational leadership and policy studies in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia and director of the Mid-Atlantic Center for Community Education since 1973. Since 1989, he also has served as the associate dean for administration. His professional experience includes roles at the University of Oregon and the Lane County Youth Project in cooperation with the Eugene, Oregon, Public Schools; the National Center for Community Education and the Flint, Michigan, Community Schools; and the St. Louis Park, Minnesota, School District. He is co-author of the American Association of School Administrator's 1994 publication, *Getting Parents Involved In the Education of Their Children*, with Gloria Gregg and Virginia Decker and of AASA's 1988 publication, *Home/School /Community Involvement*, with Virginia Decker.

**Gloria Gregg** has been the director of the Center for Community-School Development and Field Services at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, since 1976. She has been involved in developing the publication, *A Model for Rural Schools to Involve Parents in the Education of Their Children* (1989) and in completing the curriculum materials for a four-part workshop, "Native American Parents as Teachers of their Children" (1993). Currently, she serving as the principal investigator for an OERI-funded research project, "A Study of Parent Involvement in Montana Schools."

**Virginia Decker** has been the organizer and facilitator of the National Community Education Computer Network, a conferencing system with national and international participants, since 1989. She is also managing editor and senior consultant of Community Collaborators in Charlottesville, Virginia. She was formerly a research assistant with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research and Bureau of Governmental Research at the University of Oregon and an instructor at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon.